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USING
Italian
A GUIDE TO CONTEMPORARY USAGE

JOHN KINDER & VINCENZO SAVINI

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Using Italian

This is a guide to Italian usage for students who have already acquired the basics of the language and wish to extend their knowledge. Unlike conventional grammars, it gives special attention to those areas of vocabulary and grammar which cause most difficulty to English speakers. Careful consideration is given throughout to questions of style, register, and politeness which are essential to achieving an appropriate level of formality or informality in writing and speech. The book surveys the contemporary linguistic scene and gives ample space to the new varieties of Italian that are emerging in modern Italy. The influence of the dialects in shaping the development of Italian is also acknowledged. Clear, readable and easy to consult via its two indexes, this is an essential reference for learners seeking access to the finer nuances of the Italian language.

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521485562

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First published in print format 2004

ISBN-13 978-0-521-21145-4 eBook (EBL)

ISBN-10 0-521-21322-0 eBook (EBL)

ISBN-13 978-0-521-48556-2 paperback

ISBN-10 0-521-48556-8 paperback

ISBN-10 0-521-48094-9

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Contents

Preface and acknowledgments	page xvii
Abbreviations	xviii

1 Varieties of language 1

1.1	The Italian language today	1
1.2	The dialects	2
1.3	Dialect and language in contemporary Italy	2
1.4	Dialect and Italian in contact	4
1.5	Registers of language	5
1.6	Examples of regional variation: pronunciation	5
1.7	Examples of regional variation: grammar	7
1.8	Examples of register variation: grammar	8
1.9	Examples of regional variation: vocabulary	10
1.10	Extracts illustrating registers of Italian	12
	Example of R1 (Sicilian and Northern varieties)	12
	Example of R1 (Roman variety)	15
	Example of R1 (Tuscan variety)	16
	Example of written R1–2: SMS messages	17
	Example of spoken R2: <i>Un'agenzia di viaggi</i>	19
	Example of spoken R2: TV game show	20
	Example of R2–3: magazine editorial	22
	Example of R3: written communication from bank to its customers	24
	Example of R3: police report	25
	Example of R3: formal letter	27

WORDS AND THEIR MEANINGS

2 Misleading similarities 30

2.1	Similar form – different meaning: False friends	30
2.1.1	'Falsi amici' I	30
2.1.2	'Falsi amici' II: English (or English looking) words with different meanings in Italian	39

Contents

2.2	Similar form – partly similar meaning: Partial deceptive cognates	41
2.3	Paronyms with similar meanings	51
2.3.1	Paronyms with similar meanings: a general list	52
2.3.2	Paronyms with similar meanings: misleading “alterati”	66
2.4	Paronyms with different meanings	67
2.5	Verbs with similar stems	70
2.6	Gender paronyms	75
2.6.1	Gender paronyms with similar meanings	75
2.6.2	Gender paronyms with different meanings	79
2.7	Deceptive minimal pairs	83
2.8	Other types of misleading similarities	87
3	Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”	89
4	Complex verbal expressions	158
4.1	Single English verbs corresponding to complex Italian expressions	158
4.2	Single Italian verbs corresponding to complex English expressions	160
4.3	Complex Italian expressions corresponding to complex English expressions	161
4.4	Italian “impersonal” verbs	162
4.5	Verbal expressions with la, ne, ci	164
4.5.1	Idiomatic verbal expressions with la	164
4.5.2	Idiomatic verbal expressions with ne	166
4.5.3	Idiomatic verbal expressions with ci	166
5	Affective suffixes	168
5.1	Diminutive suffixes	169
5.2	Augmentative suffixes	172
5.3	Suffixes for verbs	173
6	Idioms, similes, and proverbs	174
6.1	Idioms	174
6.2	Similes based on adjectives	184
6.3	Similes based on verbs	185
6.4	Other proverbial comparisons	185
6.5	Proverbs	186
7	Personal names	188
7.1	The ancient world: Greece and Rome	189
7.2	The Bible	189
7.2.1	Old Testament	189
7.2.2	New Testament	190

7.3	The Middle Ages to the twentieth century	190
7.3.1	Non-Italian names	190
7.3.2	Italian names with a Latinized or Anglicized form in English	191
8	Geographical and astronomical names	192
8.1	Italy: administrative regions	193
8.2	Italy: cities	193
8.3	Continents	196
8.4	Europe: countries and regions	196
8.5	The Americas: countries and regions	199
8.6	Asia: countries and regions	199
8.7	Africa: countries and regions	200
8.8	Oceania: countries and regions	201
8.9	Historical or mythical places	202
8.10	Cities of the world	203
8.11	Rivers of the world	205
8.12	Mountains and volcanoes of the world	205
8.13	Planets, stars, and constellations	206
9	Abbreviations and acronyms	207
9.1	Titles and other frequently used abbreviations	208
9.2	International organizations	212
9.3	Italian non-political organizations	213
9.4	Italian official political organizations, unions etc.	214
10	Latin expressions and sayings	217
10.1	Latin expressions	217
10.2	Latin proverbs and mottoes	220
11	Grammatical terms	221
11.1	Grammatical terms	221
11.2	Punctuation marks	224
11.3	Other common terms and expressions	225
12	Numerals and telephone conventions	226
12.1	Numerals and mathematical conventions	226
12.1.1	Decimals	226
12.1.2	Mathematical operations	226
12.1.3	Ordinal numbers	226
12.2	Telephone conventions	227
12.2.1	Telephone numbers	227
12.2.2	Telephone alphabet	227

Contents

13	Measurement	229
13.1	Length	230
13.2	Weight	231
13.3	Area	232
13.4	Volume	233
13.5	Capacity (liquid)	233
13.6	Currency	234
13.7	Temperature	234
13.8	Time	235
 THE CLAUSE – combining words		
14	Gender	239
14.1	Gender and sex	239
14.1.1	Persons	239
14.1.2	Animals	240
14.2	Formation of masculine/feminine pairs	240
14.2.1	Unrelated m-f nouns	241
14.2.2	Related m-f nouns: anomalous m-f correspondence	242
14.2.3	Related nouns: patterns of m-f correspondence	242
14.3	Gender associated with types of noun	243
14.4	Gender associated with noun ending	245
14.5	Gender of compound nouns	248
14.5.1	Verb + noun	248
14.5.2	Noun + noun	249
14.5.3	Noun + adjective/adjective + noun	250
14.5.4	Other compounds	250
14.6	Homonyms distinguished by gender	252
14.7	Nouns with both masculine and feminine plurals	253
15	Number	256
15.1	Formation of plurals	256
15.2	Plural of compound nouns	258
15.3	Italian plurals which correspond to English singulars	259
15.4	Italian singulars which correspond to English plurals	260
15.5	Number concord	261
16	Pronouns	262
16.1	First- and second-person pronouns	262
16.2	Third-person pronouns	263
16.3	Order of object pronouns	265
16.4	Pronouns and verb	266
16.5	Pronouns of address	268

17	Comparison	270
17.1	Comparison of inequality	270
17.1.1	Nouns and pronouns	270
17.1.2	Other parts of speech	271
17.1.3	Alternatives to di/che	272
17.2	Comparison of equality	272
17.3	Comparison involving a clause	273
17.4	Superlatives	273
17.5	Irregular comparatives and superlatives	274
18	Word order	276
18.1	Subject and verb	276
18.2	Subject, verb, and object	277
18.3	Verbs, objects, and adverbs	279
18.4	Noun and adjective	280
18.5	Numerals and altro	283
19	Negation	284
19.1	No	284
19.2	Non	285
19.3	Negative pronouns, adjectives, and adverbs	286
19.4	Apparent negatives	288
19.5	Negation of single words	288
19.6	Other negative expressions	289
20	Periphrases	290
20.1	Stare + gerund	290
20.2	Stare a + infinitive, essere dietro a + infinitive	291
20.3	Andare + gerund	291
20.4	Venire + gerund	292
21	Verbs of movement	293
22	Auxiliary verbs in compound tenses	295
22.1	Verbs that always take avere	295
22.2	Verbs that always take essere	296
22.3	Verbs that take either, according to grammatical construction	298
22.4	Verbs that take either, according to meaning	302
22.5	Modal verbs	306
22.6	Pronouns and auxiliaries	307
23	The passive	308
23.1	Passive with venire	308
23.2	Passive with andare	309

Contents

23.3	Passive with rimanere and restare	309
23.4	Expression of the agent	309
23.5	Indirect objects	310
23.6	Other ways of expressing the passive	310
24	Reflexives and impersonals	311
24.1	Direct reflexives	311
24.2	Indirect reflexives	311
24.3	Reciprocal reflexives	312
24.4	Inherent reflexives	312
24.5	The reflexive as marker of the intransitive	313
24.6	The passive reflexive	314
24.7	The impersonal reflexive with transitive verbs	314
24.8	The impersonal reflexive with intransitive verbs	315
24.9	Other impersonal subjects	316
24.10	Impersonal objects	316

THE SENTENCE – combining clauses

25	Italian prepositions	321
25.1	a	321
25.1.1	Basic meanings	321
25.1.2	Expressing time	322
25.1.3	Expressing rate	322
25.1.4	Expressing manner	322
25.1.5	Expressing place	323
25.1.6	Expressing kind	324
25.1.7	Expressing instrument	324
25.1.8	Adverbial idioms with a	324
25.1.9	“Personal” a	325
25.1.10	Complex prepositional expressions with a	325
25.2	attraverso	326
25.2.1	Movement	326
25.2.2	Used as an adverb	326
25.3	con	326
25.3.1	Basic meanings	326
25.3.2	In adverbial phrases	327
25.3.3	Idiomatic expressions with con	327
25.4	contro	327
25.4.1	Before nouns and pronouns	327
25.4.2	Used as adverb	328
25.5	da	328
25.5.1	Basic meanings	328
25.5.2	Expressing time	329
25.5.3	Expressing purpose	329
25.5.4	Expressing characteristics or description	329

25.5.5	da used with parte	330
25.5.6	With a verb in the infinitive	330
25.5.7	Adverbial expressions with da	331
25.6	davanti a, prima di, avanti, di fronte a	331
25.6.1	Basic meanings	331
25.6.2	Used as adverbs	332
25.7	di	332
25.7.1	Basic meanings	332
25.7.2	In expressions of description or origin	333
25.7.3	Expressing time	333
25.7.4	Expressing price and measurement	333
25.7.5	Idiomatic expressions	334
25.7.6	“Grammatical” uses of di	334
25.8	dietro, dopo	335
25.8.1	dietro	335
25.8.2	dopo	335
25.8.3	dopo, dietro , and indietro used as adverbs	335
25.9	fino a, sino a, verso	336
25.10	fuori	336
25.10.1	Used as preposition	336
25.10.2	Used as adverb	337
25.11	in	337
25.11.1	Basic meanings	337
25.11.2	Expressing location or movement	337
25.11.3	Expressing change	338
25.11.4	Expressing time	338
25.11.5	Expressing manner, means, or material	338
25.11.6	Common idioms and expressions involving in	339
25.11.7	In complex prepositional expressions	339
25.12	per	340
25.12.1	Basic meanings	340
25.12.2	Expressing movement	340
25.12.3	Expressing time	340
25.12.4	Expressing purpose	341
25.12.5	Expressing reason or cause	341
25.12.6	In expressions of quantity	341
25.12.7	Common idioms and expressions involving per	341
25.13	sotto	342
25.13.1	Basic meanings	342
25.13.2	Idiomatic expressions with parts of the body	342
25.13.3	Used as an adverb	342
25.14	su, sopra	343
25.14.1	Basic meanings	343
25.14.2	Expressing location or direction	343
25.14.3	Expressing time or number	343
25.14.4	su expressing subject-matter	344
25.14.5	su in idiomatic expressions	344
25.14.6	su and sopra used as adverbs	345

Contents

25.15	tra, fra	345
25.15.1	Basic meanings	345
25.15.2	Expressing time or distance	346
25.15.3	Common idioms and expressions involving tra, fra	346
26	English prepositions	347
26.1	about	347
26.1.1	In the sense of “concerning”	347
26.1.2	In the sense of “approximately”	347
26.2	above	348
26.3	according to	348
26.4	across	348
26.5	along	348
26.6	among	348
26.7	as	349
26.8	at	349
26.8.1	Expressing place	349
26.8.2	Expressing time	349
26.8.3	In other expressions	350
26.9	because of	350
26.10	before	350
26.10.1	Expressing place	350
26.10.2	Expressing time	350
26.10.3	Expressing order of importance etc.	351
26.11	below	351
26.12	beneath	351
26.13	beyond	351
26.14	by	351
26.14.1	Expressing place	351
26.14.2	Expressing time	352
26.14.3	Expressing measure	352
26.14.4	Expressing means	352
26.14.5	Expressing cause or agent	353
26.14.6	In other expressions	353
26.15	down	353
26.16	during	353
26.17	except (for)	354
26.18	for	354
26.18.1	Expressing benefit	354
26.18.2	Expressing purpose	354
26.18.3	Expressing cause	354
26.18.4	Expressing time	354
26.18.5	Expressing place	355
26.18.6	In other expressions	355

26.19	from	355	
26.19.1	Expressing place	355	
26.19.2	Expressing time	356	
26.19.3	In other expressions	356	
26.20	in	356	
26.20.1	Expressing place	356	
26.20.2	Expressing time	357	
26.20.3	In other expressions	358	
26.21	inside	358	
26.22	instead of	358	
26.23	into	359	
26.24	of	359	
26.25	off	359	
26.26	on	359	
26.26.1	Expressing place	359	
26.26.2	Expressing time	360	
26.26.3	In other expressions	360	
26.27	out of	361	
26.28	outside	361	
26.29	over	362	
26.30	past	362	
26.31	round	362	
26.32	through	362	
26.33	to	363	
26.33.1	Expressing direction	363	
26.33.2	In other expressions	363	
26.34	towards	363	
26.35	under	364	
26.36	until, till	364	
26.37	up	364	
26.38	with	364	
27	Prepositional constructions with verbs and adjectives	365	
27.1	Verbs with no preposition before an infinitive	365	
27.1.1	Infinitive as subject of the verb	365	
27.1.2	Infinitive as object of the verb	367	
27.1.3	Verbs of perception	367	
27.1.4	Causative construction	368	
27.2	di before an infinitive	368	
27.2.1	The subject of certain “impersonal” verbs	368	
27.2.2	Verbs of saying, promising, agreeing	369	
27.2.3	Verbs of mental states	370	
27.2.4	Verbs of feeling, opinion, or will	370	
27.2.5	Other verbs	371	
27.2.6	Verb + direct object + di + infinitive	371	

Contents

27.2.7	Verb + indirect object + di + infinitive	372
27.2.8	Adjectives + di + infinitive	373
27.3	a before an infinitive	374
27.3.1	Verbs that refer to the beginning, continuing, or ending of an action	374
27.3.2	Verbs that express movement (literal or figurative)	374
27.3.3	Verbs that express a mental attitude or disposition (e.g. state, tendency, or will)	375
27.3.4	Verbs that express being or staying	375
27.3.5	Verb + direct object + a + infinitive	376
27.3.6	Verb + indirect object + a + infinitive	376
27.3.7	Adjectives + a + infinitive	376
27.3.8	a + infinitive in place of a che clause	377
27.4	da before an infinitive	378
27.4.1	After verbs	378
27.4.2	After adjectives or adverbs	379
27.4.3	After nouns	379
27.5	per before an infinitive	379
27.5.1	After verbs	379
27.5.2	After adjectives or adverbs	380
27.5.3	After nouns	380
27.6	con, da, in + article before an infinitive	380
27.6.1	con	380
27.6.2	da	381
27.6.3	in	381
27.7	Prepositional constructions	382
27.7.1	No preposition in Italian: preposition in English	387
27.7.2	Preposition in Italian: no preposition in English	388
27.7.3	Some prepositions which do not correspond in Italian and English	388
28	Use of tenses	389
28.1	Present tense (faccio, vado)	389
28.2	Future tense (farò, andrò)	391
28.3	Future Perfect tense (avrò fatto, sarò andato)	392
28.4	Present Conditional tense (farei, andrei)	392
28.5	Conditional Perfect tense (avrei fatto, sarei andato)	393
28.6	Perfect tenses – <i>Passato Prossimo</i> and <i>Passato Remoto</i>	393
28.7	Imperfect and Perfect	394
28.7.1	Imperfect tense: other uses	396
28.8	Pluperfect tense (<i>Trapassato Prossimo</i> – avevo fatto, ero andato)	396
28.9	Past Anterior tense (<i>Trapassato Remoto</i> – ebbi fatto, fui andato)	397
28.10	Modals	397

29	Sequence of tenses	399
29.1	Sequence of tenses in the indicative	399
29.2	Sequence of tenses in the subjunctive	400
29.2.1	Main verb in the Present or Future	400
29.2.2	Main verb in the Past or Conditional	401
30	The Subjunctive	402
30.1	The Subjunctive in main clauses	403
30.1.1	Wishes	403
30.1.2	Third person imperative	403
30.1.3	Third person exhortations	403
30.1.4	Questions	404
30.2	The Subjunctive in noun clauses	404
30.2.1	With main clauses expressing emotion	404
30.2.2	With main clauses expressing opinion, doubt, uncertainty, or certainty	405
30.2.3	With main clauses expressing knowing and understanding	405
30.2.4	Saying	406
30.2.5	Illusion, dream, and pretense	406
30.2.6	With main clauses expressing wanting	406
30.2.7	Permission and prohibition	407
30.2.8	With impersonal verbs	407
30.2.9	The verb aspettare	409
30.2.10	The position of the noun clause	409
30.2.11	il fatto che	409
30.2.12	come meaning che	409
30.2.13	Modal attraction	410
30.3	Indirect questions	410
30.4	Subordinating conjunctions	410
30.4.1	although, however	410
30.4.2	before	411
30.4.3	in order that, such that	411
30.4.4	unless, except	412
30.4.5	until	412
30.4.6	without	412
30.4.7	provided that	412
30.4.8	in case, in case that	413
30.4.9	when	413
30.4.10	as if	413
30.5	Relative clauses	413
30.5.1	After an indefinite antecedent	413
30.5.2	After a negative or non-existent antecedent	414
30.5.3	After unique and superlative antecedents	414
30.5.4	Expressing a hypothesis	414

Contents

30.5.5	“Modal attraction”	414
30.6	Comparatives	414
30.7	Conditional sentences	415
31	Conditional sentences	416
31.1	Hypothetical conditionals	416
31.1.1	Verb mood and tense	416
31.1.2	Other ways of saying “if”	418
31.2	Factual conditionals	419
32	Subordinate clauses	421
32.1	Explicit subordinate clauses	421
32.1.1	Relative clauses	422
32.2	Implicit subordinate clauses	424
32.2.1	Infinitive	424
32.2.2	Gerund	425
32.2.3	Participles	427
32.2.4	Nominalization	428
32.2.5	Ways of translating words in “-ing”	428

TEXTS AND THEIR STRUCTURE

33	Interjections	433
34	Fillers	439
35	Connector words and expressions	441
	Bibliography	443
	Italian word index	445
	Grammar index	467

Preface and acknowledgments

This book aims to offer a description of contemporary Italian, suitable for advanced students as well as teachers and linguists who are interested in the actual usage of the contemporary language. The authors hope they have usefully filled a gap in the available descriptions of the Italian language by providing an account which at every point combines linguistic description with an indication of the sociolinguistic weight that various ways of “saying the same thing” actually have in contemporary Italian society.

The book assumes a reasonable knowledge of the basics of Italian vocabulary and grammar and focusses on a selection of areas which cause difficulty to English-speaking students and/or which are difficult in themselves to explain adequately. This selection covers a wide range from matters of vocabulary to different levels of grammar. Thus the book begins in chapter **1** with an overview of the uniquely complex linguistic situation in contemporary Italy and gives a selection of examples of the types of Italian one may encounter in Italy. This is followed by a number of chapters, **2** to **13**, on “Words and their meanings.” These cover areas which pose problems for English speakers and include lists and descriptions of types of words not always covered by traditional dictionaries and grammars. The next chapters, **14** to **24**, deal with “The clause – combining words” and describe matters of morphology such as gender and number and some matters often not adequately dealt with in many grammars, such as word order and the choice of auxiliary verbs. The next group of chapters, **25** to **32**, is devoted to the next level of grammar, that of “The sentence – combining clauses,” and addresses some difficulties in the use of verbs and sentence construction. The final three chapters, **33** to **35**, move to the level of “Texts and their structure” and look at various ways of combining sentences and paragraphs into coherent and effective written or spoken texts.

We have attempted to follow closely the companion volumes in this series, *Using French* and *Using Spanish*, even to the point of using the same examples where possible. In this way, we hope that those interested in studying more than one of the principal Romance languages will find these volumes useful for comparison and contrast.

We are grateful to our colleagues and students in the Department of Italian at the University of Western Australia for answering our frequent questions, reading sections of the manuscript, and making several useful suggestions.

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VS

Abbreviations

Common abbreviations

adj	adjective
adv	adverb
Aus	Australian English
AUX	auxiliary
DO	direct object
esp	especially
f	feminine
fig	figurative(ly)
gen	general(ly)
indic	indicative
inf	infinitive
intr	intransitive
inv	invariable
IO	indirect object
lit	literally
m	masculine
n	noun
O	object
pl	plural
qc	qualcosa
qu	qualcuno
S	subject
s	singular
sb	somebody
sth	something
subj	subjunctive
tr	transitive
UK	United Kingdom (English)
US	United States (English)
usu	usually
V	verb

Other abbreviations

abstr.	abstract
art.	article
ch.	chapter
chem.	chemical term
comm.	commercial term
comp.	computer related term
conj.	conjunction
econ.	economic term
gram.	grammatical term
idiom.	idiomatic
interj.	interjection
Lat.	Latin
leg.	legal term
math.	mathematical term
mech.	mechanical term
med.	medical term
milit.	military term
mus.	musical term
p.p.	past participle
pres.	present
pres. p.	present participle
refl.	reflexive

1 Varieties of language

1.1 The Italian language today

Italian is the official language of the Republic of Italy. It is spoken by the 58 million inhabitants of Italy and in the Canton Ticino area of Switzerland, as well as by many millions of Italian migrants and their descendants in many parts of the world, especially Europe, North and South America, and Australia. The Italian language has a fascinating and in many ways unique history, which reflects the political and cultural history of Italy. The Italian language was based, during the Renaissance, on an idealized version of fourteenth-century Florentine. Because of the political fragmentation which beset Italy up to the Risorgimento, however, this “language” was predominantly used in writing, while for everyday speech the usual form of communication remained the local dialects. This was true, with exceptions of course, for all parts of Italy and for all social classes. Since political unification in 1861, the language has become universally adopted, and in the process has adapted rapidly to the demands of a modern, diversified society.

The Italian standard is therefore a modified version of fourteenth-century Florentine dialect. This standard is found in good dictionaries and is taught to classical actors and to newsreaders on national television. However, the Italian spoken and, to a lesser extent, written in most everyday situations differs from this standard in various ways. Furthermore, all Italians show their regional origin by their accent. A regional accent is not, in itself, indicative of register or of the social characteristics of the speaker, though local accents are usually stronger in informal speech than in formal uses of language. Furthermore, Italian, like all languages, is spoken and also written in different ways, not only according to where the speaker comes from, but also according to his/her educational, professional and cultural background, what the speaker is doing, what s/he is talking about, and so on.

1.2 The dialects

An essential, ever-present feature of the Italian linguistic landscape is dialect. The word “dialect” in English describes a regional variety of the standard language, the way English is spoken in a particular place, e.g. the “Midlands dialect” (UK), the “mid-West dialect” (USA). In Italian the word has a quite different meaning. The Italian dialects (or “dialects of Italy”) are actually separate languages, geographically distributed throughout the country, which may differ from one another so much that they can be mutually unintelligible if they are from non-adjacent areas.

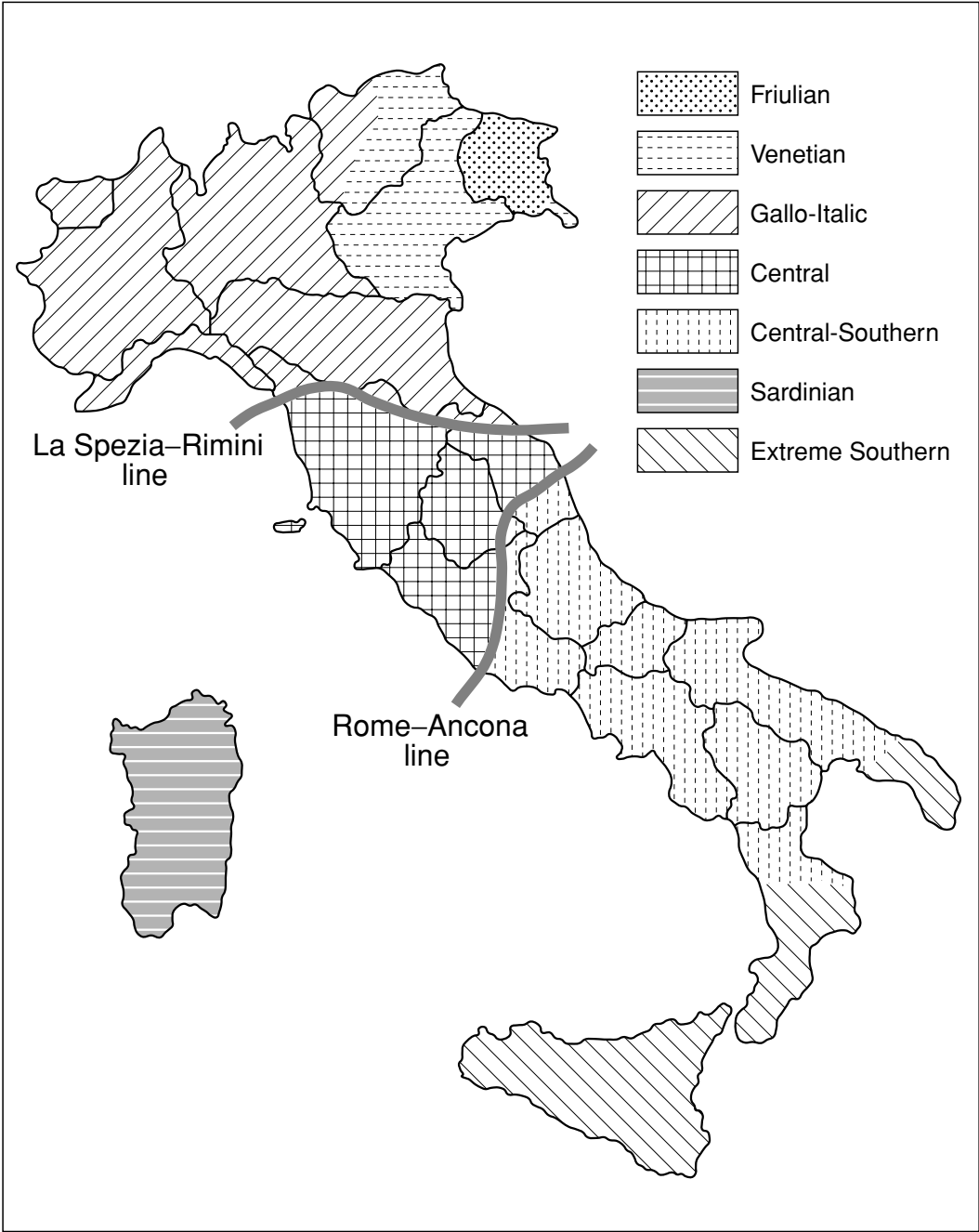
Italian is a Romance language, like Portuguese, Spanish, French, and Romanian. The Romance languages are so called because they are all derived from Latin, the language of ancient Rome and the Roman Empire. Over time, Latin developed into new forms in many different parts of the former Empire: these were referred to as the “vernacular” and correspond to what we now call “dialects.” At some stage, in each Romance area, one vernacular eventually emerged as the official “language” of the nation: in Italy, this vernacular was Florentine. The selection of one vernacular as “language” meant that the other vernaculars then assumed the label and status of “dialects.” Thus the dialects are derived from Latin, as Italian is, and are more or less closely related to Italian; but they are distinct languages, not varieties of Italian.

The dialects of Italy fall into three main geographical areas, divided by two “lines”: the La Spezia–Rimini line divides North from Center, and the Rome–Ancona line divides Center from South (see map on p. 3). In the North, the Gallo-Italic group covers all regions except the Veneto and Friuli–Venezia Giulia. In the South, Sicily and the southern tips of Calabria and Puglia (Apulia) form a separate sub-group. Friulian and Sardinian are often referred to as “minor (or minority) languages,” in recognition of their very significant differences from Italian, and their historical status as languages of their respective regions.

1.3 Dialect and language in contemporary Italy

At the time of Unification in 1861, almost all inhabitants of Italy spoke a dialect as their native language, while Italian was restricted to a small section of the population. Estimates of how many Italians knew Italian in 1860 vary from 2.5% to 12% of the population, so that approximately nine out of ten Italians were monolingual in their dialect. Progress in the spread of Italian was slow until the second half of the twentieth century. Recent surveys show that around 7 per cent of the population claim to be still dialect-only speakers and around 30 per cent claim to speak only Italian. At least 60% of the Italian population uses both Italian and a dialect on a regular basis.

Dialects are used more within the home than outside, more in informal situations than in formal ones, and more in the Northeast, the South, and



Italian dialects

the Islands than in the Northwest and the Center. Older people use them more than younger people, and men more than women. Furthermore, dialects are used more among the lower classes, by people with lower levels of education but also, interestingly, by graduates more than by people with high school diplomas. They are used more in rural areas and in smaller towns than in large towns. Besides everyday communication, they are used in other areas, e.g. literature and music.

1.4 Dialect and Italian in contact

The large numbers of people who regularly use both their dialect and Italian mean that we should classify Italy as a multilingual nation. This also means that the distinguishing line between the dialects and Italian is in many cases becoming increasingly blurred, and this in two ways. First, in everyday conversation, linguistic forms from dialect and Italian are often mixed, for different reasons and to achieve different effects. Secondly, both Italian and the dialects are being affected by their constant use by bilingual speakers. The dialects are absorbing massive influence from Italian, in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. But Italian, too, shows the results of this mixed use, as sounds, grammatical features, words, and expressions from the local dialect become accepted in the Italian of that locality. If it is true that the dialects in their traditional form are slowly dying, it is equally true that they are leaving their trace in the strongly marked regional varieties of Italian which draw so much from the dialect tradition.

The following passage, while it is invented, shows how dynamic and expressive can be the mixture of Italian (in formal and informal registers), dialects, and intermediate forms. The first speaker is a Calabrian husband, the other is his Venetian wife.

“Le libertà non vengono date. Si prendono. КРОПОТКИН!”

“Ah, che disgrassia! Tase, te digo! Tu vuoi precipitar questa casa nel baratro dell’ignominia e del disonor! Tu vuoi strascinar questa famiglia nel fango!”

“Ma quale fango, Nuruzza mia? Lu fangu sta sulle mani bianche del proprietario e del banchiere! Lu fangu è la putrida società! Anarchia non è fango!! Anarchia è onore de lu mundu, nome santo, vero sulì della nuova storia, rivoluzione immensa, implacabile!!”

(Elsa Morante, *La Storia*, Turin: Einaudi, 1974)

disgrassia: *disgrazia*, pronounced with a Venetian accent. The Venetian dialect word is **desgrassia**, and this similarity acts as a trigger for the subsequent switch to dialect.

Tase, te digo: *Taci, ti dico*, Venetian dialect.

Tu vuoi precipitar questa casa nel baratro dell’ignominia e del disonor: This is Italian. The dropping of the *-e* off **precipitare** and **disonore** adds a lofty, almost poetic, tone. The metaphorical use of **baratro** is decidedly *recherché*.

Nuruzza: An affectionate form of Nora, with a typically Calabrian suffix. The Italian equivalent would be *Noruccia*.

Lu fangu: *il fango*, Calabrian dialect.

lu mundu: *il mondo*, Calabrian dialect.

suli: *sole*, Calabrian dialect.

implacabbile: *implacabile*, a high register word, pronounced with the double *b* typical of Southern accents in Italian.

1.5 Registers of language

Italian linguists have distinguished several different registers of language, but for the purposes of this book it is more important to identify the major registers of Italian as they occur in Italy today.

- R1 The most casual register of everyday speech. It shows the greatest evidence of regional origin, including features from the local dialect (sounds, words, and grammatical features). It includes many features considered ungrammatical in contexts which require R3. Many of the features of *italiano popolare* occur in R1.
R1* words and expressions are those generally considered vulgar or “taboo.” Non-native speakers should exercise caution in using them. We make no apology for including these terms – they are among the most frequent in colloquial Italian, and must be understood!
- R2 This register will show regional origin in pronunciation but less so in grammar and vocabulary. It is a truly intermediate register, which in a sense is best understood negatively: it lacks the dialect influences and very casual style of R1, but also lacks the formality of R3. On the other hand, R2 is more flexible and is acceptable in a very wide range of contexts, in both speech and writing. This corresponds to what has been called “l’italiano dell’uso medio” or “l’italiano neostandard.”
- R3 The written standard language, as it is taught in schools and used in good-quality newspapers. R3 includes bureaucratic, literary, archaic, and highly ritualized formal uses of language. Many sub-registers have been identified, corresponding to various domains of professional and social activity, e.g. journalism, business, science, law, academia, etc.

1.6 Examples of regional variation: pronunciation

As far as possible, spoken regional or R1 forms are given below in an adapted version of standard Italian spelling, rather than in phonetic transcription. This is merely for the sake of convenience; such spellings will not normally be encountered. Some of these spellings are used by authors to give a local feel to direct speech. (See the extract from Morante, *La Storia*, above.)

The following pronunciations are found almost universally in the areas indicated, irrespective of register:

Area		Regional	Standard
NORTH	double consonants are not fully pronounced	capelo	cappello
	no syntactic doubling	a casa [a kaza], da me [da mɛ]	a casa [a kkasa], da me [da mme]
	-n pronounced as -ng after vowel	non è vero [noŋ ɛ vero]	non è vero [non ɛ vvero]
	-sci- pronounced as -si-	lasia	lascia
	soft c pronounced as ts	tsao	ciao
	s pronounced as z between vowels	casa, caso [kaza kazo]	casa, caso [kasa kazo]
	z- pronounced as dz- at beginning of words	zio [dzio]	zio [tsio]
	different pronunciation of open and closed e	bene, questo, perché [bene kwɛsto perke]	bene, questo, perché [bene kwɛsto perke]
CENTER	p, t, k pronounced with breath, between vowels	la pesca, parlato, la casa [la θɛska parlaɔ la hasa]	la pesca, parlato, la casa [la peska parlato la kasa]
	soft g pronounced [ʒ] between vowels	ragione [raʒone]	ragione [radʒone]
	syntactic doubling in particular cases	a casa [a kkasa], da me [da me OR da mme]	a casa [a kkasa], da me [da mme]
CENTER and SOUTH	soft c pronounced as sci	scinquescento	cinquecento
	ls pronounced as lts	il tsole	il sole
	ns pronounced as nts	intsomma	insomma
	rs pronounced as rts	scartso	scarso
SOUTH	syntactic doubling in particular cases	a casa [a kkasa], da me [da me]	a casa [a kkasa], da me [da mme]
	-p-, -t-, -k- pronounced as -b-, -d-, -g-	gabidano	capitano
	-mp-, -nc-, nt- pronounced as -mb-, -ng-, -nd-	cambo, angora, condendo	campo, ancora, contento

Area		Regional	Standard
	vowels at end of words pronounced as [ə]	stazione [stattsiɔnə]	stazione [stattsiɔne]
	-b- pronounced double between vowels	impossibile	impossibile
	soft -g- pronounced double between vowels	raggione	ragione
	s pronounced as -s- between vowels	casa, caso [kasa kaso]	casa, caso [kasa kazo]
SICILY	syntactic doubling in particular cases	a casa [a kkasa], una riga [una rriga]	a casa [a kkasa], una riga [una riga]
	<i>tr</i> pron as <i>ci</i> , <i>str</i> pronounced as <i>sci</i>	quacciu, sci-rada [kwattʃu ʃtʃada]	quattro, strada
	only one pronunciation of <i>e</i> and <i>o</i>	vene, bene, dove, nove [vene bene dɔve nɔve]	vene, bene, dove, nove [vene bene dove nɔve]
	different pronunciation of <i>i</i> , <i>u</i>	Sicilia, è venuto [sitʃilja ɛ vvenʌto]	Sicilia, è venuto [sitʃilja ɛ vvenuto]

NOTE:

Syntactic doubling refers to the process of doubling the first consonant at the beginning of a word, when that word follows certain other words.

Syntactic doubling does not occur in the North. Words which produce syntactic doubling are:

- words ending in an accented vowel (note that the vowel loses its stress in the process), e.g. **perché no** ['perke nno], **Gesù Maria** ['djesu mma'ria]
- certain words, usually monosyllables (exactly which words varies from region to region), e.g.

a casa [a kkasa], **come lui** ['kome llui], **che fai?** [ke ffai]

This is a feature of speech and is not shown in writing, though writers may do so in order to convey local color. In certain cases, however, certain pairs of words have become so established in the language that they are written as one word, including the syntactic doubling, e.g. **soprattutto** OR **sopra tutto**; and the monosyllabic imperatives: **dillo, fallo, datti da fare, stammi bene**, etc.

1.7 Examples of regional variation: grammar

These differences are all common in R1. Some also occur frequently in R2.

Area		Regional	Standard
NORTH	no definite article with certain possessives	mia mamma, mio papà	la mia mamma, il mio papà
	definite article with names, esp. feminine	la Maria, il Paolo	Maria, Paolo
	verbal periphrasis	sono dietro a fare	sto facendo
	position of pronouns	devi telefonarmi	mi devi telefonare, devi telefonarmi
	<i>che</i> with conjunctions	quando che, mentre che	quando, mentre
	<i>cosa</i> in questions	cosa vuoi?	che vuoi?
	use of <i>su</i> and <i>giù</i>	togliere su, prendere su	togliere, prendere
	<i>mica</i> in negatives	(non) è mica vero	non è (affatto) vero
	demonstratives plus adverbs for emphasis	questa ragazza qui, quel ragazzo lì	questa ragazza, quel ragazzo
CENTER	<i>te</i> used for <i>tu</i>	vieni anche te?	vieni anche tu?
	<i>si</i> used for <i>noi</i>	noi si va via	noi andiamo via
	irregular verbs	dassi, stassi	dessi, stassi
SOUTH	<i>a</i> used with human direct object	ho visto a Giuseppe	ho visto Giuseppe
	position of pronouns	mi devi telefonare	mi devi telefonare, devi telefonarmi
	verbal periphrasis	sto a fare	sto facendo
	verb at end of clause (Sicily and Sardinia)	siciliano sono	sono siciliano

1.8 Examples of register variation: grammar

Many of the following features are avoided where possible in R2, while some are now commonly used in R2 though they would probably be avoided in R3 and certainly in writing.

	R1	R3
Avoided in R2		
<i>suo</i> used for <i>loro</i>	i ragazzi e i suoi amici	i ragazzi e i loro amici
comparatives	il più migliore	il migliore
<i>gli</i> used for <i>le</i> (= <i>a lei</i>)	gli ho risposto subito	le ho risposto subito
<i>ci</i> used for <i>gli, le, loro</i>	non ci ho detto niente	non gli / le ho detto niente
<i>che</i> used for <i>in cui</i> (<i>dove</i>)	il paese che ti ho visto	il paese dove ti ho visto
<i>che</i> used for indirect relative pronoun	l'uomo che gli ho telefonato ieri	l'uomo al quale (a cui, cui) ho telefonato ieri
Used in R2		
repetition of object pronoun	a me non mi piace	a me non piace (OR non mi piace)
<i>a</i> used with direct object pronoun for emphasis	a noi chi ci paga?	chi paga noi? OR noi, chi ci paga?
<i>gli</i> used for <i>loro</i>	gli ho risposto ieri	ho risposto loro ieri OR ho loro risposto ieri (R3 only)
<i>ci</i> used with <i>avere</i>	c'ho tanto lavoro	ho tanto lavoro
<i>c'è</i> with plural subject	c'è molte case qui	ci sono molte case qui
<i>che</i> used to link "main" clauses	aspetta che vengo	aspetta: vengo OR aspetta perché vengo
<i>che</i> used for <i>in cui</i> (<i>quando</i>)	il giorno che ti ho visto	il giorno in cui (quando) ti ho visto
<i>che</i> used for <i>quale</i>	che vestito mi metto? che libri leggi?	quale vestito mi metto? quali libri leggi?
<i>niente</i> used as adjective	niente frutta oggi	non c'è frutta oggi
<i>cosa</i> for <i>che cosa</i>	cosa c'è?	che cosa c'è?

1.9 Examples of regional variation: vocabulary

The variety of vocabulary items among the Italian dialects is legendary. As the dialect-speaking population acquired Italian as a second language, many dialect words entered the regional vocabularies of Italian, usually undergoing some “Italianization” in the process. A survey carried out by Rüegg in 1951 asked 124 persons from 54 provinces what name they used for 242 different concepts: only one, “strong black coffee served in a bar,” was given the same name by all informants: *espresso*. Such rich geographical variation is still a major feature of spoken Italian.

This first list contains words and constructions that are widely recognised as “typical” of Italian as spoken in the North, Center, and South of Italy. In the cinema, elements such as these, together with a strong accent, would be enough to characterize a speaker as coming from one of the three areas of the country.

NORTH	CENTER	SOUTH
cosa?	che?	che?
essere (cosa c'è?)	essere (che c'è?)	stare (che ci sta?)
avere (ho fame)	avere (ho fame)	tenere (tengo fame)
anche (viene anche lei)	anche (viene anche lei)	pure (viene pure lei)
adesso (adesso vengo!)	ora (ora vengo!)	mo' (mo' vengo!)
cosa sei dietro a fare?	che stai facendo?	che stai a fare?
questo / quello	questo / codesto / quello	questo / quello
neanche, nemmeno, neppure	neanche, nemmeno, neppure	manco, nemmeno
prima	dianzi	prima
molto	molto	assai
il giorno dopo	il giorno dopo	il giorno appresso
l'anno prossimo	quest'altr'anno	l'anno prossimo
Lunedì dell'Angelo	Pasquetta	Pasquetta

Different terms for the same object or activity

Simple everyday objects and activities often have several different names in different parts of Italy. (In Italian they are called *geosinonimi*.) For example a coat-hanger is called *ometto*, *stampella*, *attacapani*, *croce*, and *appendiabiti* in the North, *gruccia* and *cruccia* in the Center, and *stanfella*, *stampella*, *crocetta*, *gruccia*, *crociera*, *appendino*, *croce*, and *angioletto* in the South. The following list gives a sample of such words in current usage, with only the most common synonyms given for each area.

NORTH	CENTER	SOUTH
	<i>bad luck</i>	
sfiga (R1-1*)	scalogna, scarogna	jella
	<i>wind-up blind on outside of window</i>	
tapparella	serranda	tapparella, persiana
	<i>broad beans (Vicia faba)</i>	
fave	bacelli	fave
	<i>chair</i>	
sedia	seggiola	sedia
	<i>cheese</i>	
formaggio	cacio	cacio
	<i>cloth for use in housework</i>	
straccio	cencio	pezza
	<i>daddy</i>	
papà	babbo	papà
	<i>doorkeeper</i>	
portinaio	portiere	portiere
	<i>to “dunk,” dip food in liquid</i>	
pucciare	zuppare, inzuppare	azzuppare, inzuppare
	<i>godparents at Baptism or Confirmation</i>	
padrino e madrina	padrino e madrina	compare e comare
	<i>melon (Cucumis melo)</i>	
melone	popone	mellone
	<i>nice</i>	
carino	bellino	caruccio
	<i>nun</i>	
suora	suora	monaca
	<i>to play hookey</i>	
bigiare (la scuola)	fare sega, seghino, filone	fare Sicilia
	<i>shoelaces</i>	
lacci	stringhe	lacci
	<i>slap</i>	
sberla	schiaffo, ceffone	sganassone, schiaffo
	<i>small object protruding from another object</i>	
pirulino	pispolino	pomello
	<i>tramp, vagrant, hobo</i>	
barbone	mendicante	pezzente
	<i>watermelon (Citrullus vulgaris)</i>	
anguria	cocomero	melone
	<i>wedding ring</i>	
vera	fedè	fedè, anello
	<i>to work</i>	
lavorare	lavorare	faticare

Different meanings for the same word

A few words have rather different meanings in different regions. Most of these are limited to R1.

	Meaning	Region
babbo	father	Tuscany
	stupid	Sicily
gnocco	stupid	Lazio
	easy	Emilia
	type of pasta	Tuscany and now all Italy
passata	hair band	Tuscany
	tomato sauce	North and South
stampella	crutch (for walking)	Tuscany
	coathanger	North and South
comare	gossip	Center, Puglia, Abruzzo
	godmother	South
scostumato	shameless	Center
	bad-mannered	South
attaccapanni	coat-hanger	North
	coat-hook	Center

1.10 Extracts illustrating registers of Italian

Example of R1 (Sicilian and Northern varieties of Italian), from *Mimi metallurgico ferito nell'onore* (1972), directed by Lina Wertmuller

The 1970s films of director Lina Wertmuller used local and informal registers of Italian, and dialect, to great effect. One has the impression of listening to dialect but in fact the speech is cleverly constructed, with only well-known dialect words and phrases, easily recognizable throughout Italy, inserted into Italian spoken with a strong regional accent. The films also exaggerate cultural stereotypes of various parts of Italy, for satirical effect. In this extract, Sicilian Mimi has moved to Turin to escape the Mafia and seek work, and Fiore is a Northerner, a left-wing street trader.

FIORE Oeuh ma che bello che è qua. Sembra Hyde Park. Guarda, sembra proprio un posto di delitti, questo qua. Una roba di quelli lì, aspetta, com'è che si dice? una roba di di maniaci sessuali. Oh, uèh, te, ma che cosa c'hai, da guardarmi così? Mi fai perfino paura. Uèh te, c'hai na faccia che sembri uno che c'ha mal di pancia: c'hai mal di pancia davvero? Sarà colpa della birra gelata.

- MIMÌ No, còppa tua iè.
 FIORE Mia? di me? e perché?
 MIMÌ Scusami. Scusami ancora, per piacere, per cortesia, compagna, ti dispiace se ti bacio?
 FIORE Mah, se lo chiedi per cortesia . . .
 (During the kiss Mimì becomes aggressive.)
 FIORE Mah? Aia! Ma no! Vigliacco d'un . . . Mascalzone! Bestia d'un porco! Che finezza signorile per un ordinario . . . – i terun vegnon giò con la piena a fà viuléns: mi tocca anche subire la violenza del terrone, ma metti! Non ti permettere mica perché ti spacco la testa, ma te la spacco. Prima mi domandi per piacere per cortesia un bacio, e dopo pratichi la violenza carnale. Ma va' all'inferno!
 MIMÌ Ma non fu violenza. Passione fu. Scusami Fiore, ma io fui travolto, io non potetti assolutamente resistere alla tentazione dei sensi. Ma quale violenza, ma per carità! Ma quando mai! Modestamente, con le femmine, risultai sempre gradito, io. Ma cu tia, cu tia bedda Fiore, è diverso, è diverso, perché tu mi piaci come non mi piacque mai nessuno. E ora, ora non mi puoi rifiutare Fiore, guarda che non mi puoi più dire di no.
 FIORE E io ti dico proprio di no. Ma per chi m'hai preso, oh?
 MIMÌ Mi rifiuti?
 FIORE Eh!
 MIMÌ E perché? Qualcheduno ti ha raccontato qualche cosa nei miei confronti?
 FIORE A me? Ma chi ti credi di essere? Ma chi è che ti conosce? [. . .] Tanto, la ragione è un'altra. Io all'amore ci credo. Per me, l'è na roba seria.
 MIMÌ E io ti sembro allegro? Serissimo sono. Io dall'inizio non capiva. Credo che caddi innamorato di te appena ti vidi.
 FIORE Te? Io no! Oh bella!

Northern characteristics of Fiore's speech

- Pronunciation* Distinctive vowel sound: **paūra**
 closed *e* pronounced open, e.g. **me**, **te**, **perché** pronounced mè, tè, perchè
 All double consonants are pronounced single
- Grammar* **te** for tu
- Vocabulary* **oeuh**: interjection expressing admiration
uèh: interjection expressing surprise
terrone, derogatory term for “southerner” (the corresponding, but less loaded, term for “northerner” is **polentone**)
mica, e.g. non ti permettere mica
- Dialect* **i terun vegnon giò con la piena a fà viuléns** = i terroni vengono giù con la piena a fare violenza
l'è na roba seria = è una cosa seria

Sicilian characteristics of Mimi's speech

<i>Pronunciation</i>	Closed <i>o</i> pronounced open, e.g. Fiore, passione, sono pronounced Fiòre, passìone, sòno Closed <i>e</i> pronounced open, e.g. femmine, allegro pronounced fèmmene, allègro Unstressed <i>i</i> pronounced in indistinct fashion [ə], e.g. ti, carità, mi pronounced [tə carə'ta mə] –<i>sci</i>– for –<i>ci</i>–, e.g. bacio, piacere pronounced bascio, piacere Retroflex pronunciation of –<i>tr</i>–, e.g. travolto pronounced ciavolto Syntactic doubling throughout, e.g. per piacere pronounced pe ppiacere, mi rifiuti pronounced me rrefiuti
<i>Grammar</i>	Use of <i>passato remoto</i> Verb at end of sentence for emphasis, e.g. passione fu, serissimo sono
<i>Vocabulary</i>	femmine for donne
<i>Dialect</i>	còppa tua iè = è colpa tua cu ttia bedda Fiore = con te bella Fiore capiva = capivo

General characteristics of informal spoken Italian

<i>Pronunciation</i>	'na for una, 'sti for questi
<i>Grammar</i>	c'hai, c'ha for hai, ha, pronounced [tʃai tʃa] Demonstratives plus adverbs for emphasis, e.g. questo qua, quelli lì Normal word order changed to place important idea at the end of the sentence, e.g. io all'amore ci credo Use of subject pronoun at the end of the clause for emphasis, e.g. risultai sempre gradito, io Loose linking of clauses, e.g. c'hai na faccia che sembri uno . . . (R2 = tale che) So-called 'cleft sentence', e.g. chi è che ti conosce? (= chi ti conosce?) Emphatic use of reflexive, e.g. chi ti credi di essere? Mixture of registers, e.g. Fiore switches to dialect at the height of her anger i terun vegnon giò a fà viuléns, then back to R2 Italian, then uses a higher register (legal) expression of condemnation pratichi la violenza carnale. Mimi resorts to an exaggerated superlative adverb, typical of R1: assolutissimamente
<i>Interjections, fillers, and connectors</i>	Mah? expresses surprise and disbelief Aia! expresses pain ma metti! Come off it! Ma at beginning of sentences Guarda!

Example of R1 (Roman variety of Italian) (from A. Sordi, *Ammazza che fusto!*, Milan: Rizzoli, 1995)

The actor Alberto Sordi specialized in portraying certain down-and-out Roman characters, including a fake noble “conte Claro.” This text comes from a radio show of 1950. While the woman attempts to impress the “count” with her formal Italian, Sordi’s language slides between standard Italian (often formulaic and literary, with many sentences in rhyming couplets), a strongly local Italian variety, and dialect.

- SORDI Che fai oggi de bono, per il tuo pranzo?
 DONNA Oh! Come il solito . . . Ecco: un po’ di formaggio qui, dal salumiere.
 SORDI Bono! Formaggio co’ le pere?
 DONNA Questo è tutto . . . Perché ormai conte Claro non si può neppur dire che io mangi . . . Io pilucco.
 SORDI A chi lo dici signó? So’ er conte Claro e nun resto de stucco. Te lo confesso, lo voi sapé? Anch’io pilucco. Ma qualche volta, come se fa? Quanno ce vo’, ce vo’ un piatto de sostanza! Comprendi l’importanza?
 DONNA Eh magari conte Claro . . . Ormai ho quasi perso il ricordo di tutto.
 SORDI Davero? Pure tu? Nun se famo vedé insieme dalla gente, che sembra brutto . . . Entramo va . . . Annamose a istruì. Rinfrescare i vecchi ricordi è sempre un dovere. Entriamo signora, entriamo dal salumiere. Buongiorno pizzicarolo . . . Pizzica, pizzica, che sei solo.
 SALUMIERE Buongiorno, desidera?
 DONNA Oh, il solito: due acciughine e un po’ di mozzarella fresca.
 SORDI Agguanta pizzicarò, mettece pure ‘sta mezza ventresca. Un po’ de prosciutto, un po’ de pecorino. Pizzicarò, aggiungece pure quel salamino . . . Tanto le cose mo me vanno bene col Presidente Pella . . . Aho, sai che te dico? Mettece pure ‘sta mortadella.
 SALUMIERE Altro signore?
 SORDI E non lo so! Voi altro signó?
 DONNA Io? Conte Claro, ma che cosa dice? Chi le ha detto che io voglio questa roba? Io non voglio niente!
 SORDI Sta’ zitta signora. Er pizzicarolo ha già incartato tutto; mica pò disfà . . . So’ stato io che ho ordinato, che me voi fa sfigurà? Andiamo signora paga tutto e io agguanto er pacco . . . Buongiorno pizzicarolo, te saluto e batto er tacco.
 DONNA Ma conte Claro io non capisco . . . Perché ha voluto che comprassi tutta questa roba?
 SORDI Come perché, signora mia? M’hai domandato un consiglio e io te lo sto a dà . . . Questo è il metodo e più non domandà.

Roman characteristics

Most of these features are present in Roman dialect (*romanesco*) and are also present in strong versions of the Roman variety of Italian.

<i>Pronunciation</i>	de, te, se, me for di, ti, si, mi
	ce for ci (third person pronoun for inanimate objects and places), e.g. mettece
	Open <i>o</i> not diphthongized, e.g. bòno, vòì, vo', pò for buono, vuoi, vuole, può
	nun for non
	quanno for quando
	davero for davvero
	Consonant elision: co', so' for con, sono
	Syllable elision: signo' for signora, pizzicarò for pizzicarolo
	Syntactic doubling throughout, e.g. ma che cosa dice pronounced <i>ma cche ccosa dice</i> , che fai oggi de bono pronounced che ffai oggi de bbono
<i>Grammar</i>	se [= si] for ci (1 pl pronoun), e.g. se famo = ci facciamo
	Abbreviated infinitives: sfigurà, sapé, vedé for sfigurare, sapere, vedere
	er for il
	entramo, annamo for entriamo, andiamo
	te lo sto a dà for <i>te lo sto dando</i> (= te lo sto a dare)
	Note that Sordi addresses the woman as signora but uses the tu form of address.
<i>Vocabulary</i>	Typical Roman exclamation: aho!
	mo for adesso
	pizzicarolo for salumiere (cf. Tuscan pizzicagnolo)
	pure for anche
	Learned reference, comically out of place: e più non domandà

Example of R1 (Tuscan variety of Italian) (from L. Bianciardi, *La vita agra*, Milan: Rizzoli, 1962)

This passage includes a constructed but realistic depiction of the variety of Italian, strongly imbued with dialect, spoken in Central Italy (the example is from Pisa), where the boundary between Italian and dialect is often far from clear. The spelling has been invented by the author to give the flavour of the pronunciation.

Persino a qualche pisano io ho aperto l'uscio di casa – che è per proverbio azzardo pericoloso; a qualche pisano di quelli che dicono *gaodé rpeoro ditupà*, e ogni tanto vengono su col sorrisino furbo a cercare lavoro. “*Nciavresti mia nposticino da guadagnà bbene senza lavorà tanto? Sai omè, sule cecinquantà rmese? Giù, madonmarbuio, un si batte iodo. Un si trova nalira peffaccantà nceo.*” E se tu gli domandi cosa vuol fare, cosa sa fare – qui è un posto da specializzati, devi presentarti con le idee chiare e precise, so fare una cosa, quella cosa, e basta – se tu glielo domandi lui rimane a bocca aperta, spalanca gli occhi, ti punta l'indice contro: “*Maffai la burlletta davvero? Gaodé,*

un lo sai osa soffà io? Un mi onosci? Lo poi domandà a coso, ome siama, a coso no? Ir figliolo di Amedeo, quello che morì anno.”

The passages in italics are, in Italian:

- Gaodé al pecoro di tuo padre
- Non c'avresti mica un posticino da guadagnare bene senza lavorare tanto? Sai com'è, sulle centocinquanta al mese? Giù, Madonna al buio!, non si batte chiodo. Non si trova una lira per far cantare un cieco.
- Ma fai la burlletta davvero? Gaodé, non lo sai cosa so fare io? Non mi conosci? Lo puoi domandare a coso, come si chiama, a coso no? Il figlio di Amedeo, quello che morì l'anno scorso.

Pronunciation Hard *c* dropped altogether between two vowels, e.g. **ome siama** for come si chiama; but not with syntactic doubling, e.g. **a coso** pron accòso.

non pronounced **un** or **n**

n for un, e.g. **nposticino**; **na** for una, e.g. **nalira**

Syntactic doubling throughout, e.g. **guadagnà bbene, peffaccantà, maffai, soffà**

Abbreviated infinitive: **guadagnà, lavorà, domandà**

Grammar **ir** for il, e.g. **ir figliolo**; **r** for al, e.g. **rnese**,

Madonnarbuio = **Madonna al buio**

tu for tuo

Repetition of pronoun referring to object of verb: in this example the object of the verb is an entire clause, e.g. **un lo sai osa soffà io**

Use of *passato remoto*

Vocabulary **Gaodé** is a distinctive exclamation of Italian as spoken in Pisa

coso, meaning *whatsisname*

anno for l'anno scorso

Example of written R1–2: SMS messages

Text or SMS (pronounced **essemmesse**) messages, which can be sent from mobile phones or some computers, frequently use a kind of informal Italian which is very like spoken language. They tend to be short, to save time and to stay within the limit of 160 characters (on most phones), and so, like SMS messages in other languages, use abbreviations of various kinds. This type of Italian is frequently also used in informal email communication. The following text has been constructed from documented forms.

A: Ciao Gigi!! dv 6?

B: Ciao amore sono in segreteria di Facoltà, devo fare liscrizione x il 2o sem. Te ke fai?

A: Sono in biblio a studiare l'ingl ma ke 2 balls:-(Li come va??

B: Czo sono qui dalle 7 e 30 e ce ancora una fila di 100 persone
AIUTOOOOOO!!!!

A: 80 fame uffà

B: ieri sera dv 6 finita???

- A: sono rimasta con Franco ke mi ha r8 le balle con la storia dei genitori
ke nn gli danno la casa al mare per il wknd
B: ankio lo visto e lo mandato a fnculo
A: oh ma qd t c metti 6 proprio 3mendo lo sai
B: LO SOOOO!!! :-)
A: c ved dopo pranzo?
B: nn posso devo andare a casa xke c sono i miei e m dicono se m fanno
part sab o dom
A: OK!!!! voglio sapere subito!?!?!? dimmeloggi pome
B: ti kiamo 4 5
A: vabbe c sent + tardi ciao xxx
B: ciao amore ricorda ke TVTB
This may be deciphered as follows:
A: Ciao Gigi!! Dove sei?
B: Ciao amore, sono in segreteria di Facoltà, devo fare l'iscrizione per il
secondo semestre. E tu che fai?
A: Sono in biblioteca a studiare l'inglese ma che palle:-(Li come va?
B: Cazzo! sono qui dalle 7 e 30 e c'è ancora una fila di 100 persone. Aiuto!
A: Ho tanta fame, uffa!
B: Ieri sera dove sei finita?
A: Sono rimasta con Franco che mi ha rotto le balle con la storia dei
genitori che non gli danno la casa al mare per il weekend.
B: Anch'io l'ho visto e l'ho mandato affanculo.
A: Oh ma quando ti ci metti sei proprio tremendo, lo sai?
B: Lo so:-)
A: Ci vediamo dopo pranzo?
B: Non posso. Devo andare a casa perché ci sono i miei e mi dicono se mi
fanno partire sabato o domenica.
A: OK. Voglio sapere subito. Dimmelo oggi pomeriggio.
B: Ti chiamo alle 4 o alle 5.
A: Vabbe' ci sentiamo più tardi ciao [baci].
B: Ciao amore, ricorda che ti voglio tanto bene.

Abbreviations Set phrases (as acronyms): **TVTB = ti voglio tanto bene**

Common words, esp. by deleting vowels: **qd = quando**,

nn = non, **c ved = ci vediamo**, **c = ci**, **m = mi**

In principle any word can be abbreviated or contracted, if
the sender believes the recipient will understand it, e.g.

wknd; sab, dom, biblio, pome

Words run together: **dimmeloggi = dimmelo oggi**

Symbols Mathematical symbols with the same sound as words: **+** =
più, **x = per**, **6 = sei**

Symbols combined with letters: **2o = secondo**,

3mendo = tremendo, **r8 = rotto**, **80 = ho tanta**

Punctuation Used more for emphasis and expressing emotion than for
conventional textual uses

<i>Spelling</i>	k replaces ch and sometimes any hard c : kiamo = chiamo , xke = perché , kasa = casa Apostrophes not used: ankio , ce = c'è , liscrizione Phonetic spellings if shorter: lo = l'ho Numbers used in place of words
<i>Interjections</i>	ke 2 balls note English word Cazzo uffa expresses frustration

Example of spoken R2: *Un'agenzia di viaggi*

This conversation is more formal, between strangers in a professional setting. Many of the features already seen in conversation occur here, but the formal nature of the exchange requires more careful grammar, more complete sentences and use of circumlocutions and formulae.

CLIENTE	Buon giorno.
AGENTE	Giorno. Un attimo solo, e sono subito da Lei.
	. . .
	Ecco, mi dica.
CLIENTE	Guardi, volevo delle informazioni sui viaggi organizzati in Australia.
AGENTE	Sì, certo. Ne abbiamo un'ampia varietà. Mi sa dire in che stagione e per quante persone?
CLIENTE	Per me e mio marito.
AGENTE	Bene. E in che stagione dell'anno?
CLIENTE	Mah, molti ci hanno consigliato dicembre–gennaio ma c'hanno detto che laggiù fa molto caldo e quindi . . .
AGENTE	Eh sì, effettivamente Natale ricorre nel periodo più caldo dell'anno, è piena estate. Comunque, potrebbe essere una esperienza simpatica, un Natale sotto il sole australiano.
CLIENTE	Ma, vede, abbiamo i genitori anziani qui a Pescara e, sa, un po' ci dispiace, così, lasciarli soli proprio a Natale. Piuttosto, mi dica Lei, a parte Natale, quali sarebbero i periodi più indicati per un viaggio non troppo lungo?
AGENTE	Beh, prima di tutto, bisogna dire che fare un viaggio così lungo per un breve soggiorno, non so se sia conveniente. Se ne avete la possibilità, vi consiglierai di fermarvi almeno tre settimane.
CLIENTE	Ah sì?
AGENTE	Beh, sa, il viaggio è lungo e c'è una certa spesa.
CLIENTE	Beh, sì, forse ha ragione. Insomma, ha delle occasioni, dei viaggi organizzati?
AGENTE	Guardi, Le do questo dépliant. Qui ci sono diverse soluzioni, a seconda dei vostri gusti, quanto volete fermarvi e quanto, insomma, volete spendere.
CLIENTE	Le dispiace se lo porto a casa per farlo vedere a mio marito?
AGENTE	No, assolutamente.
CLIENTE	Grazie, molto gentile.

AGENTE Ma si immagini. Se lo legga con comodo, e poi mi faccia sapere se trova qualcosa che La può interessare. Comunque, se avesse bisogno di ulteriori informazioni, non si faccia problemi, mi chiami quando vuole: sono a Sua disposizione.

CLIENTE Mille grazie.

AGENTE Grazie a Lei. Buona giornata.

CLIENTE Altrettanto a Lei. Arrivederci.

AGENTE Buon giorno.

Grammar

Giorno (OR **'giorno**) is less formal than **buon giorno** and may be an attempt at making the client feel comfortable

c'hanno detto is less formal than **ci hanno consigliato**, and may reveal a certain uncertainty in the client

Formulaic 'bureaucratic' clause: **se avesse bisogno di ulteriori informazioni**

Sentence construction

Signs of unplanned speech: **e quindi** . . .;

Use of conditional to make polite requests: **quali sarebbero i periodi più indicati?**

Vocabulary

"Polite" imperfect: **volevo = vorrei**

Circumlocution: **non so se sia conveniente**

Vocabulary shared with R3 and 'ufficialese' in tone

mi sa dire; ricorre; dépliant; diverse soluzioni

Interjections, fillers, and connectors

Ecco, guardi, mah, ma, beh, sa, vede, insomma

Polite formulae

Greetings and farewells: **Buon giorno, Giorno; Mi dica**

Mille grazie; grazie a Lei; altrettanto a Lei sono a Sua disposizione; molto gentile; Buona giornata; Ma si immagini

Example of spoken R2: TV game show (from T. De Mauro *et al.*, *Lessico di frequenza dell'italiano parlato*, Rome: Etaslibri, 1993)

HOST Allora Armando La Peccierella, piccolo il premio ma enorme la soddisfazione . . .

CONTESTANT soddisfazione, ecco sì.

HOST Abbiamo avuto una battaglia veramente fuori dell'usuale giovedì scorso, quando la nostra grande campionessa in carica è stata sconfitta. Pensate, invece di dire "trentasei" o "ventisei" . . .

CONTESTANT no "trentaquattro" e "venti-" . . .

HOST . . . invece di dire "trentaquattro". . .

- CONTESTANT No invece di dire “ventiquattro” disse “trentaquattro.”
- HOST . . . ha detto “trentaquattro”. (To viewers) Avete capito? E’ stato un lapsus e così questo giovanotto, che era andato addirittura sotto zero, è diventato il nostro campione e ha vinto cinquanta milioni, che comunque è sempre una bella cifra per un ragazzo . . .
- CONTESTANT Certo
- HOST . . . così giovane. (To contestant) Dunque allora c’è stata grande attesa giovedì scorso a Napoli, quando sapevano che sarebbe venuto a partecipare al nostro gioco?
- CONTESTANT Sembrava . . .
- HOST (To viewers) I napoletani, come sapete, sono sempre pieni di entusiasmo: pensate che hanno tappezzato il suo quartiere con i . . . dei manifesti che vi voglio far vedere. Guardate un po’, eh! “I Segreti di Telemike,” (laughs) “I Segreti di Twin Peaks.” E allora quelli che passavano per le strade di Napoli dicevano “ma cos’è sta storia?” Hai capito? Perché forse non sapevano che avrebbe giocato con noi. Poi, pensate, hanno dovuto, nel suo quartiere . . . a casa sua hanno dovuto – si vede che lui ha un bel terrazzo – hanno messo uno schermo gigante, ecco. Guardate, un maxischermo e qui ci sono parenti, amici che applaudivano e facevano il tifo per lui quando ha vinto, perché è stata una . . . come se avesse vinto il Napoli, ecco. Comunque, fortunato il nostro campione in carica.

Grammar

A variety of tenses is used: present, *passato prossimo*, imperfect; also pluperfect, conditional perfect. One case of the (pluperfect) subjunctive and one of *passato remoto*. At one point the narrative moves between the present, referring to the pictures being shown, **qui ci sono**, and the imperfect, taking us back to the time of the events, **applaudivano e facevano il tifo**

The speakers use the **Lei** form of address. When the Host says **Hai capito?**, he is speaking to the audience and lapses into a generic **tu** instead of the usual (and correct) **voi**

Sentence construction

Sentences are short, or are made up of coordinated clauses. Subordinate clauses are syntactically simple – relative clauses introduced by **che**, or simple adverbial or noun clauses

Formulaic sentences with inversion and no verb:
piccolo il premio ma enorme la soddisfazione;
fortunato il nostro campione in carica

Self-correction
Change of
structure

R1 features in reported speech: **Ma cos’è sta storia?**
con i . . . dei manifesti
perché è stata una . . . come se avesse vinto il
Napoli

Parenthetical side remarks Vocabulary	si vede che lui ha un bel terrazzo Vocabulary is simple and neutral The host's reference to the contestant as a giovanotto is familiar and somewhat old-fashioned
Semi-technical terms	campionessa in carica, maxischermo Use of generic adjectives before nouns, almost as clichés: la nostra grande campionessa, una bella cifra, un bel terrazzo The flat tone is lifted by adverbs: veramente, addirittura
Interjections, fillers, and connectors	Dunque, allora, comunque; ecco; guardate, guardate un po', pensate; come sapete; avete capito?, hai capito? Most sentences begin with a connector. This keeps the talk flowing and helps the host hold the floor: allora, e così, comunque, dunque allora, perché, poi, guardate
Regional features	When the Southern contestant uses the <i>passato remoto</i> disse , the Northern host repeats the verb but in the <i>passato prossimo</i> : ha detto

Example of R2–3: magazine editorial (from *Il Mondo*, 30 August 2002)

This editorial in an economics weekly aims at a style which combines specialist knowledge with a chatty, familiar tone.

Gli economisti assicurano che mai il pianeta terra in millenni di storia ha conosciuto livelli di ricchezza paragonabili a quelli raggiunti dall'occidente industrializzato nell'ultima metà del secolo scorso, quelli della società opulenta descritta da John Kenneth Galbraith. Società che è diventata ancor più che opulenta proprio in tempi recentissimi, fra il 1990 e il 2000. Ve lo ricordate? E' stato il decennio d'oro della cosiddetta new economy, di Internet, delle nuove tecnologie. Ed è stato il decennio magico della Borsa: le quotazioni salivano, salivano, salivano. Sempre. Inutile dilungarsi in ricordi, basta un esempio di casa nostra: Finmatica, media società specializzata in software bancario, venne collocata in Borsa a 5 euro; salì fino a 180. La Borsa creava ricchezza (virtuale) senza sosta.

E ci fu un gruppo di economisti (si fecero chiamare la scuola del Nuovo Paradigma) che cercò di dare fondamento teorico a quella follia sostenendo che i miglioramenti esponenziali di produttività legata alle nuove tecnologie avrebbero portato a tassi di crescita dei profitti delle imprese mai conosciuti

prima. E dunque la Borsa avrebbe continuato a salire creando ricchezza, tanta ricchezza, per tutti.

Sogni. Si trattava di una bolla speculativa ed è esplosa. Come forse sarebbe stato ragionevole aspettarsi. L'esplosione ha creato e sta creando danni e problemi a non finire, ma soprattutto ha fatto capire che qualcosa non funziona nel nostro sistema, nel senso che la corsa all'Eldorado che ha caratterizzato il decennio del boom ha sovvertito tutte le regole. E' cronaca di questi giorni: abbiamo saputo di manager che falsificavano bilanci pur di far salire le quotazioni delle loro società, di controllori che non controllavano, avallando le truffe, e via dicendo. In America l'amministrazione è già corsa ai ripari varando una serie di norme per garantire la trasparenza dei mercati, per difendere i risparmiatori dai manager disonesti, per fare in modo che ritorni la fiducia. In Italia si è aperto un dibattito sul destino del sistema: dopo il crollo del muro di Berlino e la morte del comunismo – si chiedono alcuni – non è che forse è iniziata anche l'agonia del capitalismo?

Grammar

Use of *passato remoto* for aspects of a time period barely two years past, to reinforce how much that time has been left behind

The position of **mai** at the beginning of its clause, in the opening sentence, gives an emphatic, almost dramatic, tone

The indicative in **non è che forse è**, instead of the more usual subjunctive, gives force to the statement in the **che** clause

Omission of articles gives a technical tone: **Finmatica, media società specializzata; falsificavano bilanci**

Sentence

construction

In general, a careful alternation of short and long sentences

Sentences and clauses without main verbs: **Sempre. Sogni. Inutile dilungarsi in ricordi**

Clauses written as if they were complete sentences, giving the impression they are being thought of on the spur of the moment, as in speech, e.g.:

Società che è diventata ancor più che opulenta; Ed è stato il decennio magico della Borsa; Come forse sarebbe stato ragionevole aspettarsi

Some features more typical of R2 (speech):

Repetition: **le quotazioni salivano, salivano, salivano**

Direct address: **Ve lo ricordate?**

And also R3 features:

A somewhat contrived play on words: **controllori che non controllavano**

Vocabulary

Some technical terms	collocata media società quotazioni produttività tassi di crescita dei profitti delle imprese bolla speculativa bilanci varando (. . .) norme risparmiatori	floated mid-sized company share prices productivity company profit growth rates speculative bubble accounts to pass regulations savers / investors
General R3 vocabulary	opulenta, miglioramenti esponenziali, dilungarsi, sovvertire le regole, avallare, trasparenza	
Historical allusion	la corsa all'Eldorado	
Anglicisms	new economy (introduced and hedged by cosiddetta), software, boom, manager	
Expressions with a more familiar, R2 tone	di casa nostra tanta ricchezza (instead of molta)	

Example of R3: written communication from bank to its customers (from L. Coveri, A. Benucci & P. Diadori, *Le varietà dell'italiano: manuale di sociolinguistica italiana*, Rome, Bonacci, 1998)

Gentile Cliente,
al fine di risparmiarLe inutili perdite di tempo, qualora debba effettuare operazioni per un importo uguale o superiore a Lire 3.000.000 e NON intrattenga alcun tipo di rapporto con la nostra banca (es. conto corrente, deposito a risparmio ecc.), La informiamo che potremo eseguire le Sue disposizioni solamente se Ella è munita di documento di identità e di codice fiscale.

Si porta a conoscenza di tutta la clientela titolare di rapporti di conto corrente che con le banche indicate in calce, residenti sulla "piazza," non viene effettuata la compensazione giornaliera dei titoli negoziati. Pertanto gli assegni bancari tratti sugli sportelli di dette banche verranno considerati come "fuori piazza," ai soli fini della determinazione dei giorni trascorsi i quali tali titoli devono intendersi pagati ed a prescindere dalla causale di versamento applicata all'operazione.

Grammar	Preference for nouns over verbs: non viene effettuata la compensazione giornaliera dei titoli negoziati for i titoli negoziati non verranno compensati ai soli fini della determinazione for solamente per determinare
Passive	viene effettuata, verranno considerati, devono intendersi pagati
Impersonal form	si porta a conoscenza
Ellipsis	Adjectives used elliptically for relative clauses: tutta la clientela titolare di rapporti
Sentence construction	Main clauses are short and simple, and contain almost no information; subordinate clauses are long and complex and carry the information; complex conjunctions: trascorsi i quali
Vocabulary	Formula of respect: Gentile Cliente
Less common words used in place of common ones	effettuare, eseguire for fare Ella for Lei è munita di for ha con sé in calce for alla fine della lettera pertanto for quindi dette banche for queste banche (or le suddette banche)
Synonymous expressions	Gentile Cliente, La informiamo
Technical vocabulary	Si porta a conoscenza della rispettabile clientela residenti sulla piazza, titoli, sportelli, “fuori piazza” (note the inverted commas), causale di versamento

Example of R3: police report (from I. Calvino, ‘L’antilingua’ (1963), now in I. Calvino, *Una pietra sopra*, Turin: Einaudi, 1980)

This is a classic parody of how R3 bureaucratic language can be unnecessarily complex and end up obscuring the meaning rather than aiding communication. The author identified the main characteristic of this “antilingua” as *terrore semantico*, i.e. avoiding all words that refer explicitly to concrete reality. The two sections we focus on in the passage have been marked here as {A} and {B} for ease of reference.

Il brigadiere è davanti alla macchina da scrivere. L’interrogato, seduto davanti a lui, risponde alle domande un po’ balbettando, ma attento a dire tutto quel che ha da dire nel modo più preciso e senza una parola di troppo:

{A} Stamattina presto andavo in cantina ad accendere la stufa e ho trovato tutti quei fiaschi di vino dietro la cassa del carbone. Ne ho preso uno per bermelo a cena. Non ne sapevo niente che la bottiglieria di sopra era stata scassinata.

Impassibile, il brigadiere batte veloce sui tasti la sua fedele trascrizione:

{B} Il sottoscritto, essendosi recato nelle prime ore antimeridiane nei locali dello scantinato per eseguire l'avviamento dell'impianto termico, dichiara d'essere casualmente incorso nel rinvenimento di un quantitativo di prodotti vinicoli, situati in posizione retrostante al recipiente adibito al contenimento del combustibile e di avere effettuato l'asportazione di uno dei detti articoli nell'intento di consumarlo durante il pasto pomeridiano, non essendo a conoscenza dell'avvenuta effrazione dell'esercizio soprastante.

The "original" direct speech (A) is in R2, with one ungrammatical (R1) construction: **non ne sapevo niente che . . .** In R2 this would be **non sapevo che . . .**, or **non (ne) sapevo niente del fatto che la bottigliera fosse . . .** The reported version (B) is R3.

Grammar The reflexive in **bermelo** (A) disappears in **consumarlo** (B).

Sequence of tenses: the first sentence of A is vague (**andavo . . . ho trovato**) B pedantically expresses the anteriority of the first action: **essendosi recato**.

The demonstrative **tutti quei** in (A) makes sense because it refers to something in the immediate context. In the impersonal language of the written statement (B), it is replaced by the definite article **i**.

Sentence construction The R2 version contains three sentences for a total of five clauses, only one of which is a subordinate clause. The R3 version is one long sentence, with seven subordinate clauses.

A: each action in the story is a separate finite verb: **andavo, ho trovato, ho preso, sapevo, era stata scassinata**.

B: the main verb is **dichiara**. This is the only finite verb (in fact the main clause is simply **il sottoscritto dichiara**). All the action verbs are non-finite or expressed as nominalizations: **essendosi recato, d'essere incorso, avere affettuato, non essendo a conoscenza, l'avvenuta effrazione**.

Prepositions and adverbs

A: **in (cantina)**; B: **nei locali di**

A: **dietro**; B: **situati in posizione retrostante a**

A: **per**; B: **nell'intento di**

A: **di sopra**; B: **soprastante**

Vocabulary

Semi-technical vocabulary B: **Il sottoscritto, dichiara, detti articoli**

Nominalization A: **accendere**; B: **eseguire l'avviamento**
A: **trovato**; B: **incorso nel rinvenimento**

Generic vs specific vocabulary	A: preso ; B: effettuato l'asportazione
	A: era stata scassinata ; B: l'avvenuta effrazione
Simple vs complex vocabulary	The precise, concrete terms of A are replaced in B by more generic descriptions, e.g.:
	A: la stufa ; B: l'impianto termico
	A: fiaschi di vino ; B: prodotti vinicoli
	A: cassa ; B: recipiente
	A: carbone ; B: combustibile
	A: bere (bermelo) ; B: consumare
	A: bottiglieria ; B: esercizio
	A: stamattina ; B: nelle prime ore antimeridiane
	A: andare ; B: recarsi
	A: cena ; B: il pasto pomeridiano
	A: sapere ; B: essere a conoscenza di

Example of R3: formal letter

This recent, authentic, and unedited letter, from a State museum to a person who had requested information, is in an elaborate style which would be difficult to understand for most Italians.

OGGETTO: Richiesta informazione su G.M. nato 1833. Invio.

Si dimette, qui compiegata, la relazione elaborata dalla dr.ssa P.B., che presta servizio in quest'Istituto, circa l'indagine in oggetto, richiesta dalla S.V.

In ordine alla ricerca perfezionata si concorda sul metodo, sul livello d'approfondimento, sugli esiti.

Pertanto siffatta relazione s'approva, si sussume e si loda nella speranza d'aver soddisfatto in congrua guisa la richiesta.

Il Direttore

The style is impersonal and elaborate in the extreme. The Direttore is sending a report, prepared by a member of his staff, and gives it his approval in this covering letter. But the use of impersonal **si** (for all main verbs) and learned/archaic vocabulary gives a bureaucratic, almost abstract, quality to the relationship between the writer of the letter and the matters he is referring to.

Grammar

All main verbs have impersonal **si** as subject.

Note lack of conjunction between the three phrases in the second sentence.

Vocabulary

Items common in formal correspondence:

Oggetto:	Re:
in oggetto	above (i.e. in the line beginning "Oggetto")
dalla S.V.	by you (S.V. = Signoria Vostra)

Items not normally found even in bureaucratic language	si dimette	(it) is released
	qui	attached, lit. “here folded together”, usually allegata ;
	compiegata	the expression corresponds to “please find enclosed”
	in ordine a	with respect to
	perfezionata	(which has been) completed
	siffatta	such, this
	s’approva	not unusual elision of si
	si sussume	this verb means <i>to subsume</i> , but here is equivalent to <i>adopt</i>
	si loda	it is striking that the Direttore <i>praises</i> the report
	in congrua	in an appropriate way
	guisa	

Words and their meanings

The following points apply throughout Chapters 2 to 13.

- Generally speaking, only the more common meanings of the Italian words and expressions listed in this section are taken into consideration.
- Italian adjectives are given in their masculine singular form.
- The gender of Italian nouns is given in some difficult cases; for all other instances refer to Chapter 14.
- In normal Italian spelling, accents are written only on a stressed vowel at the end of a word spelt with two or more vowels, e.g. **città**, **università**, **già**, **può** (except for **qua**, **qui**, where the **u** cannot be stressed). Some monosyllables take an accent to distinguish them from other words otherwise spelt the same, e.g. **è** – **e**, **dà** – **da**, **sé** – **se**, **tè** – **te**, **là** – **la**.

An accent is not usually written on an internal vowel, though this may occur to eliminate possible ambiguity, e.g. **prìncipi** (pl of **principe**) – **prìncipi** (pl of **principio**). We have used this device on many occasions to help with pronunciation. In normal usage such accents should not be written.

- Whenever appropriate, the usual Italian pronunciation of words of foreign origin is indicated in phonetic spelling in square brackets.

2 Misleading similarities

2.1 Similar form – different meaning: False friends

The following two sections list pairs of words in the two languages that although similar in form have different meanings.

2.1.1 ‘Falsi amici’ I

Except for a handful of cases – namely, **grugno**/groin, **ostrica**/ostrich, **scannare**/to scan, **tappo**/tap (2nd meaning), **portiere**/porter (2nd meaning) – the pairs consist of cognates, i.e. words with a common origin.

“Falso amico”	English equivalent	English cognate	Italian equivalent
abile	skilful, clever	able	capace
accidente (m)	(usu) stroke	accident	incidente (m)
agenda	diary, notebook	agenda	ordine (m) del giorno (less frequently, agenda)
aggiudicare (qc a qu)	to award (sth to sb)	to adjudicate	giudicare, decidere
agonia	death pangs	agony	angoscia, dolore acuto

R1* vulgar or indecent

R1 informal, colloquial

R2 neutral, unmarked

R3 formal, written
Italian words and expressions are R2 unless otherwise indicated. See also p. 5.

The gender of nouns is given only where it is not predictable from the principles given in ch. 14.

In some words, an accent is used to indicate the main stress but should not be used when writing. See p. 29.

The usual Italian pronunciation of foreign words is given in phonetic spelling in square brackets whenever appropriate.

“Falso amico”	English equivalent	English cognate	Italian equivalent
agonizzare (R2–3)	to be in the death throes	to agonize (over sth)	tormentarsi (a causa/proposito di qc)
argomento	topic, subject-matter; reason	argument (= discussion)	discussione, lite (f)
arguire (R3)	to infer, to deduce	to argue	discutere, sostenere
assessore	alderman, city/town councilor	assessor (expert); (tax)	perito; agente delle tasse
attendere (qc/qu)	to wait (for sth/sb)	to attend (= to be present) to attend to sth/sb (= to take care of sth/sb)	assistere (a qc), presenziare (qc) (R3) assistere (qu), badare (a qc/qu) , BUT ALSO attendere (a qc/qu) (R3)
attico	penthouse	attic	soffitta
attuale	present, current	actual	reale, vero, di fatto
avvertimento	warning	advertisement	annuncio (pubblicitario), inserzione (pubblicitaria) (newspaper), pubblicità (radio, TV, cinema)
baracca	hut, shed, hovel	barracks	caserma (f s)
bordare	to hem	to board (a ship, a plane) – (a train, a bus, a car, a bicycle) – (to provide lodgings) (tr), (to take lodgings) (intr)	imbarcarsi, salire (su) salire (su+art./in) alloggiare (tr) alloggiare (intr)
bravo (adj)	(adj) good (of people, usually at doing something); (interj, with agreement in Italian) bravo! brava! etc.	brave	coraggioso
camera	room, chamber BUT ALSO camera (not often, usu television or cinema)	camera – (cine, tele, video)	macchina fotografica macchina da presa, cinepresa, telecamera

“Falso amico”	English equivalent	English cognate	Italian equivalent
campo	field	camp	accampamento, campeggio
carro	cart, chariot, waggon	car	macchina, auto(mobile) (f R2–3)
casino	(R1–2) brothel; (R1*–1) mess (= confusione)	casino	casinò
casseruola	saucepan	casserole	(piatto consistente di) cibo cotto in casseruola
casuale	fortuitous	casual	informale, semplice
casualmente	fortuitously	casually	senza formalità, semplicemente
cauzione	security, bail	caution	cautela
cava	quarry, pit	cave	caverna, grotta
cocomero	water melon	cucumber	cetriolo
cognato/-a	brother/sister in law	cognate	parente (m/f), congiunto; parola affine
collegio	(boarding) school; ALSO board, council, body of people in the same profession	college (UK, Aus) –(US)	scuola (superiore), pensionato (universitario) ALSO (Cambridge, Oxford) college ['kɒlədʒ] (m) università, istituto universitario
commediante (m/f)	(R3) actor, (R1–2) hypocrite, pretender	comedian	(attore) comico, attrice comica
commozione	emotion	commotion	agitazione, confusione, trambusto
comodità	comfort	commodity	merce (f), prodotto
compiacente	obliging, complaisant	complacent	compiaciuto di sé
compiacenza	courtesy, complaisance; satisfaction	complacency	compiacimento di sé
complezione (R2–3)	constitution (of body)	complexion	carnagione

“Falso amico”	English equivalent	English cognate	Italian equivalent
concreto (adj)	concrete (adj)	concrete (n)	calcestruzzo (R2–3), cemento
concussione (R3, leg.)	extortion, misappropriation	concussion –(med.)	scuotimento, scossa commozione cerebrale
conduttore	driver; conductor (heat, electricity)	conductor (bus) – (orchestra) – (lightning rod)	bigliettaio direttore (d’orchestra) parafulmine (m)
confrontare	to compare	to confront	affrontare; – (leg.) mettere a confronto BUT ALSO (intr) confrontarsi (con qu) = to argue (with sb)
consistente (adj) – (pres. p.) (in/di)	solid; relevant; consisting (of)	consistent	coerente, costante
contento (adj)	happy	content (adj), contented content (n)	soddisfatto contenuto
dècade (f)	period of ten days	decade (= 10 years)	decennio
deludere	to disappoint	to delude	illudere
delusione	disappointment	delusion	illusione
destituito	removed from office	destitute	povero, indigente (R2–3)
destituzione	removal from office	destitution	povertà, indigenza (R2–3)
dilapidare (R3)	to waste, to squander (money, a fortune)	to dilapidate (tr)	ridurre in cattivo stato, mandare in rovina
dilapidato	wasted, squandered	dilapidated (gen) – (of buildings)	in cattivo stato in rovina, cadente
disgrazia	misfortune, accident	disgrace BUT to be in/to fall into disgrace	vergogna, disonore essere/cadere in disgrazia
domanda	question	demand	richiesta
domandare	to ask for	to demand	esigere, pretendere

“Falso amico”	English equivalent	English cognate	Italian equivalent
editore	publisher	editor – (head of a paper) – (edition reviser) – (film)	redattore direttore curatore, editore tecnico del montaggio
educazione	(usu) upbringing; manners	education	istruzione, formazione BUT ALSO (as school subject) educazione (fisica/musicale/ sessuale etc.)
effettivo (adj)	real, actual	effective (adj)	efficace
effettivamente	in reality, actually	effectively	efficacemente
esito	result, outcome	exit	uscita
estenuante	tiring, weakening	extenuating	attenuante
estenuare (R3)	to weaken, to tire (tr)	extenuate	attenuare
eventuale	possible	eventual	finale
eventualmente	possibly	eventually	alla fine
evidenza	obviousness	evidence	prova, testimonianza
evincere (R3)	to deduce	to evince	dimostrare, manifestare
fabbrica	(usu) factory	fabric	tessuto, stoffa
facile	easy	facile	superficiale
fastidioso	annoying, vexing	fastidious	pignolo, esigente, meticoloso
firma	signature	firm (n) – (of lawyers)	ditta, impresa, azienda studio legale
fisico (n)	physicist; physique, body	physician	medico, dottore
fracasso	crash, din, uproar	fracas	rissa, lite (f)
geniale	full of genius, inspired, brilliant	genial	gioviale, affabile, cordiale
grazioso	cute, graceful	gracious	gentile, cortese
grosso	big, large	gross	grossolano, volgare, crasso (R3)
grugno (R1–2)	snout	groin	inguine (m)
guerriglia	guerrilla warfare	guerrilla (fighter)	guerrigliero
inabitabile (adj)	uninhabitable	inhabitable	abitabile

“Falso amico”	English equivalent	English cognate	Italian equivalent
incidenza	influence, effect	incidence	ricorrenza, frequenza BUT angle of incidence = angolo d’incidenza
infatti	indeed	in fact	in effetti, anzi
ingenuità	ingenuousness, naïveté	ingenuity	ingegnosità
ingiuria	insult	injury	ferita, lesione
ingiuriare	to insult	to injure (sb)	ferire (qu), fare male (a qu)
ingrossare (tr); ingrossarsi (intr)	to cause sb/sth to swell or to become/look big/fat; to swell, to become big/fat	to engross (tr)	assorbire, affascinare
interrogazione	(periodical) oral test at school; parliamentary question	interrogation	interrogatorio (by police, during trials etc.)
intimare (R2–3)	to order, to command	to intimate	far capire, sottintendere; dichiarare
intossicare	to poison	to intoxicate	ubriacare, inebriare (R2–3)
invidioso	envious	invidious	odioso
istanza (R3)	petition	instance	esempio , BUT ALSO istanza (R3, leg.)
largo	wide	large	grande, grosso
lettura	reading	lecture (formal) – (university)	conferenza lezione
libraio	bookseller	librarian	bibliotecario
libreria	bookshop	library	biblioteca
locazione (R3 leg.)	renting; lease	location	posizione; posto
lussuria	lust	luxury	lusso
lussurioso	lustful	luxurious	lussuoso
marrone (m) – (adj)	chestnut chestnut brown	maroon (n)	(color) marrone rossiccio
miseria	poverty, indigence	misery	infelicità, sofferenza

“Falso amico”	English equivalent	English cognate	Italian equivalent
misero	poor, wretched	miser	avaro
moneta	coin	money	denaro, soldi (m pl)
morbido	soft	morbid	morboso
moroso	slow to pay, defaulter	morose	cupo, tetro, imbronciato
notorio	generally known	notorious	famigerato
occorrenza	(possible) need; recurrence	occurrence	avvenimento, evento
occorrere	to be necessary	to occur	accadere; venire in mente
ossequioso	obliging, respectful	obsequious	servile, adulatore
oste (m) ostessa (f)	inn-keeper	host hostess	ospite (m/f, ALSO = guest), padrone/-a di casa ; BUT hostess (on a plane) = attendente di volo, hostess (f)
òstrica	oyster	ostrich	struzzo
paesano (adj/n)	relating to a small town/dweller in a small town (paese)	peasant	contadino
pantomima	mime show	pantomime (= Christmas show)	spettacolo rappresentato nel periodo natalizio
paragone (m)	comparison	paragon	perfetto esemplare
parente (m/f)	relative, relation	parent	genitore
patente (f)	(usu) driving licence	patent	brevetto
pavimento	floor	pavement (sidewalk)	marciapiede (m)
petrolio	(mineral) oil, petroleum	petrol (UK, Aus) petrol (US)	benzina gasolio, nafta
petulante	insolent, impudent	petulant	irascibile, irritabile
petulanza	insolence, impudence	petulance	irascibilità, irritabilità
polluzione (R3 med.)	nocturnal emission (during sleep)	pollution	inquinamento
precipizio	ravine, chasm	precipice BUT fig (= perilous situation)	parete rocciosa erta e scoscesa precipizio
preservativo	condom	preservative (n)	conservante (m)

“Falso amico”	English equivalent	English cognate	Italian equivalent
pretendere	to want to, to expect, to claim (unjustly)	to pretend	 fingere, fare finta
prevaricare (R3)	to act dishonestly, to abuse one's powers	to prevaricate	agire in modo ambiguo, cavillare (R3), tergiversare (R2–3)
processare	to put on trial	to process	sottoporre a un processo di lavorazione; elaborare (data); considerare (to consider)
pronto (adj)	ready; (interj. inv) hello (on the phone)	pronto (adv)	immediatamente, subito
querela	law suit, legal action	quarrel	litigio, bisticcio
rapire	to kidnap; (fig) to enrapture	to rape	violentare, stuprare (R2–3)
recita	play (usu by amateurs, e.g. at school)	recital	esibizione solistica, recital [usu 'retʃital]
retribuzione	remuneration, reward, pay	retribution	castigo, punizione
riassumere	to sum up, to summarize; to re-employ	to resume	riprendere, ricominciare
ricoprire	to cover, to cover again	to recover	ricuperare, ritrovare (tr) riprendersi (intr)
riconoscenza	gratitude	reconnaissance	ricognizione
ricordare	to remember; to remind	to record	registrare
ricordo	memory; souvenir	record	nota, documento; record (sport etc.)
rilevante	important, outstanding	relevant	pertinente
rilevanza	importance	relevance	pertinenza
risentire (tr) - (di qc)	to hear again, to feel again; to feel the effects (of sth)	to resent (sth/sb)	risentirsi (per qc/con qu)
rude	rough (of people)	rude	maleducato

“Falso amico”	English equivalent	English cognate	Italian equivalent
rumore	noise	rumour	voce (f), diceria
scalpello	chisel	scalpel	bisturi (m)
scannare	to cut the throat (of animals or people)	to scan	scrutare; dare un’occhiata; scandire; (computer) scannerizzare (R2–3)
sensibile	sensitive	sensible	sensato, assennato
simpatico	nice, likeable	sympathetic	comprensivo
simpatia	niceness (quality); attraction (feeling)	sympathy	comprensione, commiserazione
sopportare	to bear, to endure, to tolerate	to support	sostenere, mantenere (= to provide livelihood)
spada	sword	spade	vanga; (card suit) picche (f pl)
spogliare	to undress, to strip (also fig)	to spoil – (fig, e.g. a child)	rovinare viziare
sportivo (adj/n)	sporty; sportsman/-woman	sportive (adj)	allegro
stravagante	eccentric, odd	extravagant	spendereccio, prodigo (R2–3, of people), esoso (R2–3, of prices), eccessivo
tappo	plug, cork	tap	(for water) rubinetto; (light blow) colpetto leggero
triviale	vulgar, obscene	trivial	banale, fùtile
vacanza	(usu) holiday	vacancy	usu translated with a noun + libero (adj) , e.g. posto libero, stanza libera; BUT ALSO (R3) vacanza (e.g. della sede pontificia)
vendicare	to avenge, to revenge	to vindicate	giustificare, rivendicare
vento	wind	vent	foro di ventilazione
venuta (n)	arrival, coming	venue	luogo convenuto

“Falso amico”	English equivalent	English cognate	Italian equivalent
verbalizzare	to include in a report (tr); to write a report (intr)	to verbalize	esprimere a parole
verso (di una poesia) - (di un animale) - (= direzione)	line (of a poem) call (of animals) direction, way	verse (= stanza) - (= poetry in gen) - (Bible)	strofa versi (m pl) versetto
veste (f)	(s) = frock; garment, clothing (often fig = guise, capacity, format) (pl) = clothes	vest (UK) - (US, Aus)	maglia gilè (m), panciotto

2.1.2 “Falsi amici” II: *English (or English looking) words with different meaning in Italian*

Some of the following words have been imported into Italian as part and parcel of specific activities (e.g. the game of poker) or sports (e.g. football). As a consequence, their use in Italian is limited to very definite contexts and only partially overlaps with their use in English. Other words in the list have totally different meanings in the two languages. The usual Italian pronunciation of the foreign words in the following table has been indicated in square brackets.

All the words listed are masculine nouns in Italian (unless otherwise stated) and select their articles according to their pronunciation (e.g. **il/un jolly**).

Word	English equivalents of the word as used in Italian	Italian synonyms (if any)	Italian equivalents of the word as used in English
bar [bar]	bar (place of refreshment)	caffè (m)	bar barra, sbarra (long piece of metal/wood); saponetta (soap); lingotto (gold etc.); professione legale (leg.); battuta (mus.)
basket ['basket]	basketball	pallacanestro (f)	cesto, canestro
body ['bɒdi]	body suit, body (stocking)	–	corpo

Word	English equivalents of the word as used in Italian	Italian synonyms (if any)	Italian equivalents of the word as used in English
box [bɒks]	pen (esp horses, cattle), playpen; small garage shower cubicle	recinto (piccolo) garage [ga'raʒ]; cabina per la doccia	scatola (not big), cassetta , cassa (crate)
camping ['kæmpɪŋ]	camp-site	campeggio	(to go camping) andare in campeggio
cargo ['kɑrɡo]	cargo ship/plane	nave/aereo da carico	carico
cocktail ['kɒkteɪl/'kɒktel]	cocktail party; cocktail (ALSO fig = mixture);	- - fig miscuglio , miscela	cocktail
corner ['kɔːnər]	corner kick (football)	calcio d'angolo	angolo
eskimo/eschimo ['eskɪmo]	type of wind-cheater fashionable in the 1970s	giaccone (m) (impermeabile)	eschimese
flipper ['flɪpər]	pinball machine	biliardino (elettrico)	pinna
footing ['fʊtɪŋ]	jogging	-	equilibrio (balance); base (f), basamento (of buildings, R3)
full [fʊl]	full house (in poker)	-	pieno (adj)
goal [ɡɔl] (often written gol)	goal (football scoring)	rete (f)	scopo , meta , fine (m); porta (football structure)
golf [ɡɒlf]	jumper (UK, Aus), sweater (US); golf (sport)	maglione (m), maglia di lana	golf (sport)
hostess ['hɒstəs] (f)	air hostess, female flight attendant	attendente (f in this case) di volo	padrona di casa
jeans : [dʒɪnts] (usu m p, but also m s and inv adj)	jeans, denim (una gonna (di) jeans = a denim skirt)	-	jeans
jolly ['dʒɒlli]	joker (playing card)	matta	allegro (adj), cordiale (adj)
mister ['mɪstər]	football coach	allenatore	signor(e)
office (R2–3) ['ɒfɪs]	butler's pantry laundry	anticucina guardaroba , lavanderia	ufficio

Word	English equivalents of the word as used in Italian	Italian synonyms (if any)	Italian equivalents of the word as used in English
poker ['pɒkər]	poker (game) four (of a kind, e.g. poker d'assi = four aces)	- (quattro)	poker (game); attizzatoio (for fire)
record ['rɛkɔrd]	record (sport etc.)	primato	documento, atto; disco (mus.); record (sport etc.)
relax [re'laks]	relaxation	riposo, distensione	rilassarsi (V), distendersi (V)
scotch [skɒtʃ]	adhesive tape Scotch whisky	nastro adesivo whisky ['wiski] NOTE: (usu) il/un/i whisky	scozzese (adj)
smoking ['zmɒkɪŋ]	dinner jacket (UK, Aus), tuxedo (US)	-	fumare, fumante, fumando
stage [staʒ, but often steidʒ/steidʒ]	training period, workshop	corso, periodo di tirocinio	palcoscenico, scena
starter ['stɑrtər]	choke (car)	(valvola dell') aria	motorino d'avviamento
tight ['taɪt]	morning suit	-	stretto (adj); teso (adj)

2.2 Similar form – partly similar meaning: Partial deceptive cognates

The cognates listed in this section have partially overlapping meanings in the two languages. In some way, they are even more deceptive than the previously listed 'straightforward' false friends. The semantic proximity between these cognates is intrinsically unstable and provides ideal conditions for the expanding influence of English on the Italian language.

R1* vulgar or indecent
R1 informal, colloquial
R2 neutral, unmarked
R3 formal, written
 Italian words and expressions are R2 unless otherwise indicated. See also p. 5.

The gender of nouns is given only where it is not predictable from the principles given in ch. 14.

In some words, an accent is used to indicate the main stress but should not be used when writing. See p. 29.

The usual Italian pronunciation of foreign words is given in phonetic spelling in square brackets whenever appropriate.

Italian	Partly equivalent English lookalike	Notes
abusare (di qc/qu) (R2-3)	to abuse (= to take advantage of sth/sb, to commit indecent assault on sb)	BUT to abuse (= to insult) = insultare
accomodare	to accommodate (= to reconcile)	ALSO = (usu) to fix, to repair accomodarsi = to make oneself comfortable, e.g. prego, si accomodi! = please, come in/sit down! BUT accommodate (= to provide lodgings) = ospitare, alloggiare
accusare	to accuse	ALSO (accusare un dolore fisico; accusare il colpo) = to show
affettare	to affect (= to show)	BUT to affect (= to influence) = influire (su qc/qu)
aggiustare	to adjust (= to rearrange, esp of clothes)	ALSO = (usu) to fix, to repair, to mend
alcolico	(adj) alcoholic (of drinks, substances)	ALSO (m) = alcoholic drink BUT alcoholic (n, of a person) = alcolizzato
alterare (qc) (R2-3)	to alter (sth, usu for the worse)	BUT to alter (gen) = cambiare
amministrare	to administer, to administrate (= to manage, to govern)	BUT to administer (= to give) = dare (= to give medicines, sacraments) = somministrare (R3)
annoiare	to annoy	ALSO (usu) = to bore BUT to annoy (usu) = dare fastidio, seccare (R1-2), scocciare (R1)
applicazione	application; concentration; the act of applying (e.g. medicaments), of putting into practice (e.g. theories)	BUT application (for a job) = domanda (di lavoro)
appuntamento	appointment (engagement)	BUT appointment (designation) = nomina
assassinio	assassination	ALSO = murder
astuto	astute (cunning)	BUT astute (discerning) = sagace, avveduto
avarizia	avarice (miserliness)	BUT avarice (greed) = avidità

Italian	Partly equivalent English lookalike	Notes
bomba	bomb	ALSO = a great thing/person (R1) BUT bomb (US, Aus = failure) = fiasco ; (Aus = old car) = catorcio (R1), carretta (R1)
bordo	board in the expressions on board = a bordo , outboard = fuori bordo (engine or boat)	BUT board (= plank) = tavola, asse (m); - (= body of people with decision-making powers) = consiglio (di amministrazione), collegio - half/full board = mezza pensione/ pensione completa
cancelliere	chancellor	BUT chancellor of a university = rettore
carattere	character (feature, personality, font)	BUT character (in a book etc) = personaggio
carta	card - da gioco = playing card; - di credito = credit card - da visita (rare) = business card	ALSO = paper, document, map, charter
cartello	(R3 econ.) cartel	ALSO (usu) = sign, placard
catapulta	catapult (milit.)	BUT catapult (= sling) = fionda
collare (m)	collar (for animals, priests)	BUT collar (shirt) = colletto, collo - (coat) = bavero - (necklace) = collana - collar bone = clavicola
collettore (R3)	collector (tax, money)	ALSO = collection drain, river etc. BUT collector (stamps, art etc.) = collezionista (m/f)
compasso	compasses, calipers	BUT compass = bussola
competizione	competition (= contest)	BUT competition (= rivalry) = rivalità - (comm.) = concorrenza
comprensivo	comprehensive (= inclusive)	ALSO (of persons) = understanding BUT comprehensive (= exhaustive) = esauriente
compromesso (n)	compromise	ALSO (leg.) = preliminary contract

Italian	Partly equivalent English lookalike	Notes
concorrere	to concur (= to contribute, a qc = in sth)	ALSO = to participate (e.g. concorrere alle spese = to participate in the expenses); to compete BUT to concur (= to agree) = essere d'accordo, concordare
conferenza	conference (e.g. conferenza stampa = press conference)	ALSO = (formal) lecture
confidenza	confidence (= faith in oneself)	ALSO = familiarity; confidential revelation
confortevole (R2–3)	comfortable (active, = giving comfort)	ALSO = comforting BUT comfortable (passive = at ease) = comodo (also active, = giving comfort)
congelare, congelarsi (intr)	to congeal (= to freeze)	BUT to congeal (= to coagulate) = coagulare (intr -si)
consentire (a qc , con qu su qc)	to consent	ALSO (tr) = to allow (sth to sb = qc a qu)
controllare	to control	ALSO = to check, to verify, to inspect
convenzione	convention (= agreed usage)	BUT convention (= conference) = convegno, congresso, conferenza
coscienza	conscience	ALSO = conscientiousness, consciousness
(essere) costipato	(R3) (to be) constipated (usu soffrire di stitichezza , (essere) stitico (R1–2))	ALSO (not common) = to have a cold
costipazione	(R3) constipation (usu stitichezza)	ALSO (not common) = bad cold
creatura	creature	ALSO (R1) = child
crema	cream (of milk; cosmetic; ALSO fig = best part of sth)	ALSO = custard BUT cream (of milk) = (usu) panna (less frequently, crema (di latte)) – (medicament) = (usu) pomata
cristianità	Christianity	ALSO = Christendom
decadere	to decay (= to decline)	BUT to decay (= to rot) = marcire – (= to decompose (intr)) = decomporsi – (of teeth) = cariarsi
decente	decent (= proper, appropriate)	BUT decent (of moral quality) = rispettabile

Italian	Partly equivalent English lookalike	Notes
deferire (R2–3)	to defer (= to refer)	BUT to defer (= to postpone) = differire (R2–3), rimandare
denunziare	to denounce	ALSO = to make known to the authorities, to report, to reveal, to expose
difettivo (R3)	defective (gram.)	BUT defective (gen., = faulty) = difettoso
differire	to differ	ALSO (R2–3) = to defer, to delay
domestico	(adj) domestic (related to home and family)	ALSO domestico (n) = house servant BUT domestic (internal affair) = interno, nazionale
emozione	emotion	ALSO = excitement, agitation
enfasi	emphasis	ALSO (usu) = undue emphasis, rhetorical exaggeration, bombast
enfatico	emphatic	ALSO (usu) = over-emphatic, bombastic
epico (adj)	epic (adj)	BUT epic (n) = poema epico, epopea (R2–3)
esibizione	exhibition (display)	ALSO presentation (of documents); show; performance BUT exhibition (= exposition) = esposizione, mostra
espletivo (R3)	expletive (= filler, esp gram.)	BUT expletive (= swear-word) = imprecazione (R2–3), parolaccia (R1–2)
facilità	facility (ease)	BUT facility (= facilitation) = facilitazione, agevolazione ; facilities (= installations) = attrezzature (f pl)
fallire	to fail	ALSO = (intr) to go broke/bankrupt; (tr) to miss (a target etc)
familiare (adj)	familiar	ALSO = pertaining to the family, familial
ferale (R3)	feral (funereal)	BUT feral (= wild) = selvaggio, selvatico - (= cruel) = crudele
fermo (adj)	firm (steady, determined)	ALSO = still, motionless; - (as a command, with agreement) stop!
festa	feast (holiday)	ALSO (R1–2) = (generic for) birthday, name day BUT feast (= banquet) = banchetto, festino (R2–3)

Italian	Partly equivalent English lookalike	Notes
festivo	festive (relating to holidays)	BUT festive (= merry) = festoso, allegro
figura	figure (shape, illustration, person)	BUT figure (= number) = numero, cifra - (= amount) = somma, cifra
fine (adj)	fine (refined, thin)	BUT fine (= beautiful) = bello - (= good) = (molto) buono, (molto) bravo (of people)
flemma	phlegm (coolness)	BUT phlegm (= mucus) = sputo (mucoso), scaracchio (R1)
forma	form	ALSO = mould BUT form (document to fill) = modulo - (= school level) = classe (f)
formazione	formation	ALSO = education, training
frase (f)	phrase	ALSO = sentence
frizione	(R2–3) friction (massage); (R3) rubbing between two bodies (physics)	ALSO (usu) = clutch (cars) BUT friction (between surfaces or people) (usu) = affrito
fungo	fungus	ALSO = mushroom, toadstool
idioma (m)	idiom (= language, dialect)	BUT idiom (= expression typical of a language) = locuzione, idiomatismo (R3), frase idiomatica
ignorare	to ignore	ALSO = not to know (NOTE: ignorante (R1) = rude)
importante	important	ALSO = considerable (sum, loss)
inconscio (adj)	unconscious (of behaviour)	BUT unconscious (of people, = out cold) = svenuto, incosciente, privo di sensi
incosciente	unconscious (= out cold)	ALSO = irresponsible, careless
intendere	to intend	ALSO = to hear, to understand
intervenire (in qc, su qc/qu)	to intervene	ALSO (a qc) = to be present, to take part - (su qc/qu) = to operate (surgically) (on sth/sb)
introdurre	to introduce (to let in, to put in; to start)	BUT to introduce (= to make people meet) = presentare

Italian	Partly equivalent English lookalike	Notes
invalido (n/adj)	invalid (= disabled [person])	BUT invalid (of things, = not valid) = (usu) non valido (invalido is only R3 leg.)
investire	to invest	ALSO = to run down (with a vehicle), to collide with sb/sth; to assail, to hit
istruire	to instruct	ALSO = (leg.) istruire un'inchiesta = to start an investigation BUT istruito (adj) = educated, learned
lancio	launch, launching (of rockets, missiles etc.; of products on the market)	ALSO = throwing, throw (gen, including sport, e.g. lancio del disco = discus throw); jump, drop (with a parachute); introduction (of an actor, for instance) BUT launch (of a ship) = varo - (of a book) = presentazione - (= boat) = lancia, scialuppa, barca
lavoro	labor (econ.)	ALSO (usu) = work, job BUT labor (= hard work) = fatica - (= working people/time) = manodopera - (in giving birth) = doglie (f pl), e.g. avere le doglie = to be in labor - (political party) = partito laburista
licenza	licence	ALSO = leave (milit.); school leaving examination/diploma BUT driving licence = patente (f)
manifestazione	manifestation	ALSO = demonstration (political etc.)
marcia	march (milit., mus.)	ALSO = speed, gear (mech.); motion e.g. mettere (tr)/ mettersi (intr) in marcia (to set into motion, to get going); walk; walking (sport discipline)
materiale (m)	material (= matter)	BUT material (= fabric) = stoffa
medicazione	(R2–3) medication (application of medicament)	ALSO = wound dressing BUT medication (= medicament) = medicina, medicamento (R2–3)
mobile (adj)	mobile, movable	ALSO mobile (m) = piece of furniture
muovere	to move (tr)	BUT to move (emotionally) = commuovere - (gen, intr) = muoversi - (house) = traslocare, trasferirsi
opportunità	opportunity	ALSO = opportuneness, timeliness

Italian	Partly equivalent English lookalike	Notes
orfano	orphan	ALSO (orfano di padre/di madre) = fatherless/motherless
palazzo	palace	ALSO multi-story building, block of flats
pensione	pension	ALSO = superannuation; boarding house; boarding charge; accommodation with meals (pensione completa = full board, mezza pensione = half board)
percepire	to perceive	ALSO = to receive (usu pay/salary)
pezzo	piece (part from a whole; chess, music, etc.)	ALSO = newspaper article; excerpt; part (mech.); idiom.: un pezzo = a long time; (un pezzo di . . . = a great big . . . (e.g. un pezzo d'uomo = a great big man; pezzo d'asino! = you great big dunce!); pezzo grosso = bigwig; pezzo forte = pièce de résistance.
polso	pulse (med.)	ALSO (usu) = wrist
pope (m)	pope (Greek Orthodox priest, papa)	BUT Pope (= Pontiff) = papa (m)
portento	portent (= prodigy)	BUT portent (= omen) = presagio
portiere	porter (= janitor)	ALSO = goalkeeper (sport) BUT porter (for luggage) = facchino
preparazione	preparation	BUT the preparations (for an event) = i preparativi ; - (chem.) = preparato
preservare	to preserve (= to protect)	BUT to preserve (= to keep in good condition) = (usu) conservare
primitivo	primitive (crude; primordial)	ALSO = former, earlier, originary
processo	process	ALSO = lawsuit, trial
propaganda	propaganda	ALSO = advertising
proposizione (R3)	proposition (math.)	ALSO = clause (gram.) BUT proposition (= proposal) = proposta
proseguire	to prosecute (to continue)	BUT to prosecute (legally) = (tr) perseguire ; (intr) ricorrere in giudizio
provvedere	to provide (to make available)	ALSO = to take (the necessary) steps; - (a qc/qu) = to look after sth/sb

Italian	Partly equivalent English lookalike	Notes
questione	question (problem)	BUT question (= interrogation) = domanda
reale	real	ALSO = royal
reattore	reactor	ALSO = jet (plane, engine)
registrare	to register, to record	ALSO (mech.) = to adjust
regno	reign	ALSO = kingdom
relazione	relation(ship)	ALSO = affair; report BUT relation (= kinship) = parentela - (= relative) = parente (m/f)
resto	rest (= remaining part)	ALSO = balance (of a payment), change; - (math.) = remainder resti (pl) = remains BUT rest (repose) = riposo
reticente (R2–3)	reticent (= unwilling to talk)	BUT reticent (= reluctant) = restìo , riluttante
revisione	revision (contracts, texts etc.); overhaul (engines); auditing (accounts)	BUT revision (= review for an exam etc.) = ripasso
ricezione	reception (radio waves etc.)	BUT reception (= party) = ricevimento - (= receiving sb) = accoglienza - (hotel) = reception [re'seppʃon] (f)
riconciliare	to reconcile (= to end a disagreement)	BUT to reconcile (= to harmonize) = conciliare
ricorrenza	recurrence	ALSO = (recurrent) occasion/festivity
ricorrere	to recur	ALSO = to have recourse, to resort
 riferirsi (a qc/qu)	to refer (to) (intr)	ALSO riferire (tr) = to tell, to report, to relate BUT to refer (tr) = (ri)mandare , deferire
riportare	to report	ALSO = to bring/take back; to carry over (of numbers)
ristorare	to restore (= to refresh)	BUT to restore (art works, buildings) = restaurare
santuario	sanctuary (temple)	BUT sanctuary (= place of protection) = asilo (for people); riserva (naturale) (for animals)
scenario	scenario	ALSO (usu) = theater set, scenery (ALSO fig)

Italian	Partly equivalent English lookalike	Notes
scolaro, -a	scholar (= schoolboy, -girl)	BUT scholar (= learned person) = studioso, erudito (R2-3)
secolare	secular (lay)	ALSO = hundreds of years old
sentenza	sentence (leg.)	BUT sentence (gram.) = frase (f)
sicurezza	security (stability; financial security)	ALSO = safety (e.g. sicurezza stradale = road safety, cintura di sicurezza = safety belt); (self-)confidence
sicuro	secure (stable; with no danger, well defended)	ALSO = safe (e.g. al sicuro = safe, in a safe place); sure; confident, steady (of persons); (adv, R1-2) certainly, di sicuro = certainly
soggetto	subject (gram., art)	ALSO = person BUT subject (= school topic) = materia - (of a country) = cittadino - (of a ruler) = suddito
sostanziale	substantial (= fundamental)	BUT substantial (of meals) = sostanzioso - (= considerable) = considerevole, consistente - (= solid) = solido
sperimentare (tr)	to experiment (on/with sth)	ALSO = to try, to experience
spettacolo	spectacle	BUT spectacles (= glasses) = occhiali (m pl)
stabilimento	establishment (act of establishing)	ALSO = specialized building for industrial (and other) purposes, works, factory
storia	story	ALSO = history
succedere (intr)	to succeed (= to follow)	ALSO = to happen BUT to succeed (= to be successful) = riuscire, avere successo (in qc)
suggestione	suggestion (psychological)	BUT suggestion (= piece of advice) = suggerimento
superbo	(of things) superb	ALSO (of people) proud, haughty
suscettibile	susceptible	BUT susceptible to (e.g. disease) = soggetto a
tavola	table (set for eating)	ALSO = plank, board; BUT table (gen) = tavolo
temporale (adj)	temporal	ALSO temporale (m) = (thunder)storm
termine (m)	term	ALSO = boundary; end BUT term (time) = periodo (di tempo) - (= 3 months of school) = trimestre

Italian	Partly equivalent English lookalike	Notes
trio	trio (music); (fig.) set of three persons connected in some way (work etc.)	BUT trio of things (or persons, in some cases) = terna (R2–3); NOTE: terzetto (threesome) is used if the connection between three persons is coincidental.
tronco (m)	trunk (tree, body)	BUT trunk (luggage) = baule (m) - (car) = bagagliaio , baule (m) - (elephant) = probòscide (f)
udienza (R2–3)	audience (papal)	ALSO = court hearing (leg.) BUT audience (theater etc.) = pubblico, spettatori (m pl)
umore	(R3) humour (= [biological] liquid)	ALSO (usu) = mood BUT humour (= wit) = umorismo
vago	vague	ALSO (R3, literary) = eager; beautiful; wandering
vano (adj)	vain (= useless, empty)	ALSO vano (n) = space; room; opening BUT vain (= conceited) = vanitoso
verificare	to verify	ALSO = to check NOTE: verificarsi = to happen
vizioso	vicious (= corrupt)	BUT vicious (= savage, ferocious) = selvaggio, feroce
vuoto (n)	void (= vacuum, emptiness)	ALSO (adj) = empty BUT void (= vacant) = vacante - (= devoid) = privo (di qc/qu) - (= null) = nullo

2.3 Paronyms with similar meanings

The highly phonetic nature of the Italian alphabet means that two words identical in sound will have identical spelling. By comparison with

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languages like English or French, in Italian there are few real homonyms, that is, unrelated words that sound the same but mean different things, e.g. **piano** *plan* and **piano** *plane*, or **scolare** *to drain* and **scolare** (adj) *related to school*. In most cases, the difference in meaning between identical Italian words simply reflects different stages of the semantic evolution of the same word, e.g. **espresso** (m) meaning *express, special delivery letter*, as well as *espresso* (coffee). This section will therefore concentrate not on homonyms but on paronyms, i.e. words with different meanings that, although not identical, are similar enough in form and sound to constitute a potential source of ambiguity for the student.

Intransitive verbs taking the auxiliary **essere** (cf. chapter 22) have been indicated throughout this section.

2.3.1 Paronyms with similar meanings: a general list

accezione (R3) meaning	accettazione acceptance; reception (in a hospital)	
accrescimento (R2–3) increase	crescenza (R3) growth (usu physical)	crescita growth (gen)
alcolico (adj) alcoholic (of substances) (n) alcoholic drink	alcolizzato (n) alcoholic (person)	
ambiente atmosphere, ambience, environment	àmbito circumscribed space; (fig) scope, circle	
animato alive, lively; animated	animoso brave; hostile	
anno year (gen); buon anno = happy new year	annata period of one year, with reference to its events or its duration, e.g. una buona annata = a good year (in terms of production, usu agricultural); all the issues for one year of a newspaper or periodical	
apparizione apparition	apparenza outward appearance	
argomentazione line of reasoning; complex of interconnected reasonings	argomento topic, subject matter; reason	

arrossare (usu tr) to make red, to reddden	arrossire (intr AUX essere) to blush	
assaporare to savour (also fig)	insaporire to make tasty	
atterraggio landing (of a plane)	atterramento knocking down (of a person in wrestling, boxing etc.)	
attrattiva psychological attraction, appeal; (in the pl) appealing features	attrazione attraction (gen, also = highlight of a show)	
avanzo (econ.) surplus; (math.) remainder; ALSO (usu pl) remains, leftovers; (fig) avanzo di galera = jail-bird	avanzata advance (esp milit.)	avanzamento act of advancing or putting forward; promotion; progress
boccata mouthful (usu of gaseous or liquid substances); una boccata d'aria = a breath of fresh air	boccone (m) mouthful of food, morsel; (fig) something to eat	
bollare to stamp; (fig) to brand	bollire (tr and intr) to boil	
caldo (adj) warm (also fig) (n) warmth, heat	caloroso (adj) warm (only fig); (R1–2) said of a person who does not feel the cold	
calorifero (R2–3) (n) radiator, heater	calorifico (adj) calorific	calorico (adj) caloric
cambiamento change	cambio change; swap, e.g. facciamo (a) cambio (R1–2) = let's swap; exchange (also econ.), exchange rate; (mech.) gears, gear-box	scambio exchange (not econ.), swap, trade; mix up; scambio ferroviario = railway points/switch; scambi commerciali = trade

campo field (also fig); (sport) field, oval, pitch, court; camp (same meaning as accampamento , and in set phrases, e.g. piantare/levare il campo = to pitch/to strike camp)	accampamento encampment, camp (of troops, nomads, refugees)	camping (m) camp-site (for leisure)	campeggio camp-site; camping, e.g. andare in campeggio = to go camping
cantante (m/f) singer (gen)	cantore (R2–3, cantora f) chorister (usu in church)	cantautore (cantautrice f) singer who writes his/her own songs	
canzone (f) song (with words, popular, e.g. le canzoni della prima guerra mondiale = the (pop-)songs of the years of the First World War); type of poem	canto art of singing, singing (also of birds); melody; song (liturgical, military, e.g. i canti della prima guerra mondiale = the military songs of the First World War); canto (poetry)		
captare (R2–3) to pick up, to intercept (usu with devices such as a radio etc.)	catturare to capture		
carro cart, waggon, chariot; carro bestiame = cattle wagon, stock car (US); carro armato = tank; carro funebre = hearse	carrello trolley (cart) (shopping, tea); carriage (typewriter); undercarriage (plane); dolly (cinema)	carretta small cart; (fig, R1) old, run-down vehicle	carriola wheelbarrow
carrozza carriage; coach, passenger car (US)	carrozzella small carriage; horse-drawn cart for hire (in Rome and Naples); pram, baby carriage (US); wheelchair	carrozzina pram, baby carriage (US)	carrozzone (m) caravan (circus, gipsies)

cattiveria naughtiness, naughtiness, mischief (also = naughty action)	cattività captivity	
cava quarry	caverna cave	
cemento concrete	cimento (R3) test, trial; danger	
cerchio circle; hoop	circo circus	circolo circle, circolo polare artico/antartico = Arctic/Antarctic Circle, circolo vizioso = vicious circle; club, association
cinta belt (clothing accessory); enclosure wall, cinta delle mura = circle of walls; muro di cinta = boundary wall	cinghia strap; belt (clothing accessory, mechanical)	cìntola belt (clothing accessory); waist
cintura belt (clothing accessory or for the purpose of protection, e.g. cintura di sicurezza = safety belt; cintura di castità = chastity belt); waist, girdle	cinturone (m) holster-belt	cinturino watch-strap
colorato colored	colorito (adj) colored, colorful (also fig of speech, but not of character); red or pink, referring to the cheeks (n) skin color (esp of the face); (fig) coloring of expression (in language, music, art)	
colpevole (adj) guilty, culpable (n, m/f) culprit	colposo (R3) culpable (of actions that are damaging but without malice), omicidio colposo = manslaughter	
compimento (R2–3) completion	complimento compliment	complemento complement

compito (R2–3) usu well-mannered, polite, but also completed	compiuto (p.p. of compiere) completed, finished, ha compiuto tre anni = he/she has turned three (years old)	
comprensibile comprehensible, understandable	comprensivo (of persons) understanding; (of things) comprehensive, inclusive	
concentrazione concentration (also mental)	concentramento concentration (not mental); campo di concentramento = concentration camp	
conduttore (R2–3) driver (trains, public transport, and also [R3] Formula 1); conductor (of heat, electricity); (R3 leg.) tenant	conducente (m R2–3) driver (esp public transport), e.g. non parlare al conducente = do not speak to the driver	
conoscente (m/f) acquaintance	conoscitore (conoscitrice f) connoisseur, expert	
creatore (adj) creative (= that creates); (n, creatrice f) creator, il Creatore = the Creator, the Maker	creativo (adj) creative (= that can create, esp with reference to imagination)	
cuocere (tr with direct object always expressed) to cook (to roast, to boil etc), e.g. cuocere la pasta = to cook/to boil the pasta (intr AUX essere) to cook (intr AUX avere) (fig, R1–2) to burn (of the sun), e.g. il sole oggi cuoce = today it's very hot	cucinare (tr) to (prepare and) cook food, a dish, a meal etc, e.g. cucinare la pasta = to (prepare and) cook the pasta (and its sauce, possibly); so cucinare (NOT so cuocere) = I can cook; cucinare la cena = to prepare and cook dinner	
deforme deform	difforme (R2–3) different, dissimilar	
difettivo (R3) defective (gram.)	difettoso faulty, defective (gen)	deficiente (R2–3) lacking sth; (R1) idiot
effettivo actual	efficace effective	efficiente efficient

emotivo emotional, excitable (of persons), concerning emotions	emozionante exciting	
energico energetic, full of energy, strong	energetico concerning energy, e.g. fonte energetica = energy source	
fallire (tr) to miss (the mark) (intr AUX essere) to fail, to be unsuccessful	fallare (R3) to make a mistake, to err	
famoso famous, renowned	famigerato (R2–3) notorious (usu of persons)	
felicità happiness	felicitazione (usu in the pl) congratulations	
festività festivity, holiday, (holy) Day, e.g. la festività della Pasqua = Easter Day	fešta feast, holiday; party; (R1–2) birthday, name-day (= onomastico)	
festivo relating to holidays and non-working days in general	festoso festive, cheerful, merry	
fondazione act of founding, e.g. la fondazione di Roma = the foundation of Rome; foundation (as in charitable organization); (pl) foundations of a building	fondamento foundation (of a building, pl -a); also fig (pl -i), e.g. una teoria senza fondamento = a groundless theory	
fossa hole in the ground; grave	fossato ditch; moat	
freddezza coldness (also fig)	freddo (n) cold (adj) cold	freddura (R2–3) witticism, pun
gelo frost (in general, freezing temperature, ice), e.g. giorni di gelo = freezing days	gelata frost (a single occurrence of frost, for instance during one night), e.g. questa settimana ci sono state due gelate = this week there have been two frosts	

giorno

day (a period of 24 hours as well as, in contrast with night, the period of daylight, with all related meanings); **buon giorno!** = (usu) good morning! but also = have a good day! (concluding a visit, a conversation etc); **un bel giorno** = one day (in stories); **di giorno** = during the day, in daylight

giornata

day (usu the time between dawn and dusk, with reference to the way of spending it or its duration or the 'quality' of its events, including the weather); **buona giornata!** = have a good day!; **una bella giornata** = a beautiful day; **di giornata** = today's, fresh (esp of eggs); **in giornata** = (within) today; a special or historic day, e.g. **le cinque giornate di Milano**; **la giornata missionaria** = Mission Day

giudiziario, giudiziale

(R3) concerning judges or judgments, judicial, judiciary

giuridico

concerning the law, legal

governatore

(**governatrice** f)
governor (official position)

governante

(m) person who governs
(f) nanny, housekeeper

giudicare

to judge

giustiziare

to execute

guardia

act of guarding, e.g. **fare la guardia a qc/qu** = to guard sth/sb; guard (one or more soldiers or armed citizens with guarding responsibilities); sentry

guardiano

keeper, guardian, watchman, e.g. **guardiano dello zoo** = zoo keeper, **guardiano notturno** = night watchman

impazzire

to go mad

impazzare

to run wild

inclinare

(tr) to tilt, to tip
(intr) (R3) to lean; to be inclined to

inchinare

= **chinare**, but less frequent

chinare

(tr) to lower, to bow, to bend towards the ground, usu head, eyes, e.g. **il capo, la testa, gli occhi, lo sguardo**, as a sign of submission, modesty, humiliation, shame etc.

inclinarsi to tilt (intr), to bend over (usu of things and in a rather rigid way, in opposition to piegarsi)	inchinarsi to bow (also fig = to give in), to curtsy (= fare l'inchino/la riverenza)	chinarsi to stoop, to bend down (only of persons)
inconscio (adj) unconscious (of behaviour) (n) unconscious	incosciente irresponsible; unconscious (out cold)	
informale informal	informe shapeless	
informazione piece of information	informatica information science, IT	
interesse (m) interest	interessamento interest (not econ.); intervention (usu of a bureaucratic or political kind, as in "sb's good offices")	
interrogazione (periodical) oral test at school; parliamentary question	interrogatorio interrogation (by police, during trials etc.)	
lamento lament, moan, wailing	lamentela complaint	
lingua tongue (also fig); language (of a community, a nation; as opposed to dialects)	linguaggio language (gen, as way of communicating; in particular, faculty of speech); way of speaking, jargon, e.g. linguaggio burocratico = bureaucratic jargon	
lusso/lussuoso luxury/luxurious	lussuria/lussurioso lust/lustful	
mantenimento sustenance, upkeep, maintenance	manutenzione maintenance (= repair and upkeep of machinery, roads etc.)	
marcare to stamp, to mark (also in sports); to emphasize; to score a goal	marchiare to mark, to stamp, to brand (also fig)	
mattino, mattina morning (time of the day)	mattinata morning (period of time between dawn and midday, with reference to its duration, to its events or to the weather)	

medicina medicine (science, drug)	medicazione dressing (of a wound); application of medication	medicamento (R2–3) medicine (= drug)	
medio middle finger	media average, mean	(mass) media (m pl) [mas 'midja/'medja] (mass-) media	medium (m/f) medium (in seances)
medio (adj) medium, e.g. altezza media = medium height; in the middle, e.g. le (scuole) medie inferiori/superiori = ‘middle’ school (first three years after primary school)/high school (next five years)	mediano (adj) in the middle; (n) centerfield player, half-back (sport)		
montagnoso/ montuoso full of mountains, mountainous, hilly	montanaro (adj) pertaining to mountain dwellers, e.g. canzone montanara = mountain song (m, f- a) mountain dweller	montano (adj) pertaining to the mountains, e.g. flora montana = mountain flora	
monte (m) mountain, mount (esp in names), e.g. il monte Bianco	montagna mountain, mountainous region, e.g. andare in montagna = to go to the mountains		
morbido soft	morboso morbid		
notte (f) night (gen)	nottata night (with reference to the way of spending it or its duration or the “quality” of its events, including the weather)		
onda wave (gen, also in physics); the stress, also in fig uses, is on continuity and swelling more than on breaking power	ondata breaker, wave; (fig) surge, wave; the stress, also in fig uses, is more on the breaking power of the wave		

originale (adj) pertaining to the origin (of sb/sth), original; new, eccentric; authentic; (n, m) original; (n, m/f) eccentric person	originario (adj) originally from a given place, e.g. originario dell'America = originally from America; of the place of origin, e.g. il paese originario = the country of origin; original, former	
perseguire to pursue; (R3) to prosecute (legally)	perseguitare to persecute	
piano (adj) flat, level; plane (adv) slowly; softly (n) flat surface; plain; plane; floor, storey; plan; pianoforte NOTE plane tree = plàtano - plane (tool) = pialla	piana level ground, plain	pianura plain, level ground
polpo octopus	pòlipo polyp NOTE: often also used for polpo	
potere capacity of acting according to one's will, power (absolute, judicial, legislative, executive etc.); influence, authority	potenza strength, power (physical, mech., math., and also = country); potency (sexual)	
pregiudicato (m, f -a) previous offender (leg.)	spregiudicato (adj) free from prejudice; unscrupulous	
preparazione preparation (gen)	preparato (n) preparation (chem.)	preparativo (usu in the pl) preparations
presenziare (tr/intr) to be present (at sth = qc/a qc)	presentare to introduce sb, to present	
procedura procedure	procedimento way of proceeding; course, development; process; proceedings (leg.)	
processo process, course; trial (leg.)	processione procession	

proposta proposal	propòsito resolution, intention; topic, matter, e.g. in proposito = on this topic; a proposito = while on this topic, by the way		
radio (f) radio (m R3) radius (bone); radium	raggio ray, beam (of light); spoke (of a wheel); radius (of a circle), e.g. nel raggio di cinque chilometri = within a five-kilometer radius		
rapimento kidnaping	rapina robbery (of banks, people etc., but not houses)		
rapire to kidnap, to abduct; (fig) to enrapture	rapinare to rob (banks, people etc., but not houses)		
recupero (ricupero) recovery, retrieval, salvage; il ricupero/ i minuti di ricupero = stoppage time (sport)	ricòvero hospitalization; shelter; old people's home		
recita play (usu by amateurs, at school etc.)	recital [usu 'retʃital] solo performance, recital		
relitto wreck (also fig)	reliquia relic (religious)		
restaurazione reinstatement, restoration (politics, history)	ristorazione food catering, restaurant catering	restauro restoration (of buildings, art etc.)	ristoro refreshment, relief
ricetta recipe; medical prescription; (fig) cure	ricettazione receiving of stolen goods		
ricoscenza gratitude	ricoscimento recognition; acknowledgment	ricognizione reconnaissance	
rilassare to relax (tr) rilassarsi = to relax (intr)	rilasciare to release; to give (an interview); to issue (a document); (less common) to relax (tr)		

ritirare to withdraw (tr, gen)	ritrarre to withdraw, to draw back, to retract (usu hands, feet etc.); to depict, to paint, to make a portrait	ritrattare to recant; to retract (an accusation)	retrarre (R3) to retract (as in ritrarre)
ritiro retreat, place of retreat (religious or similar); revocation (of passport, driver's licence etc.); collection (of money, tickets etc.); withdrawal (also military, but without urgency), e.g. il ritiro programmato dei soldati dell'ONU = the planned withdrawal of the UN soldiers	ritirata retreat (military, usu in front of an advancing enemy); tattoo (milit.); latrine		
rocca fortress (usu on a mountain)	roccia rock (substance, geological term)		
romano Roman	romanico Romanesque	romantico Romantic; romantic, sentimental	romanzo (adj R2–3) Romance; (n) novel
romanesco (adj) related to modern Roman customs (cuisine, dialect etc); (n) the dialect of Rome	romanista (adj) related to Roma football team; (n) supporter or player of Roma football team; (R2–3) Romanist (law, philology, archeology)	romancio (R3) Romansch	romeno/rumeno Romanian
rotare (ruotare) (tr and intr) to rotate, e.g. la Terra ruota intorno al sole = the Earth rotates around the Sun	roteare (R3) (tr and intr) to rotate, to whirl, to roll around (quickly), e.g. roteare gli occhi = to roll one's eyes		

segretario (m), -a (f)	segreteria secretary's office, secretariat	
seguire to follow	seguire to continue	
selvaggio (adj) wild, of anything that lives in forests or wild places, often (also fig) with a connotation of fierceness and violence; pertaining to a very primitive culture (n) savage	selvatico (adj) wild, of spontaneous plants and untamed animals that live free from human interference (n) gamy flavour or smell, e.g. sa di selvatico = it tastes gamy	
sensato sensible, judicious	sensibile sensitive; noticeable, perceptible	sensitivo sensitive; sensorial
sera evening (time of the day), di sera = in the evening; ieri sera = last night, yesterday evening	serata evening, night (period of time between sunset and the night, with reference to its duration, its events or the weather); soirée, evening performance or ball or party	
sostenere to support, to maintain (also fig); sostenere un esame = to sit for an exam	sostentare to provide sustenance, to maintain economically	
sostanziale fundamental; (philosophy, R3) constituting a substance	sostanzioso full of substance, substantial (e.g. un pasto sostanzioso = a substantial meal)	
spezia spice	specie (f) species	
spirituale spiritual	spiritoso witty, funny	spiritico spiritistic, spiritualistic

squadra set-square; team; squadron (two or more divisions in the navy or the air force)	squadriglia squadron (air force, small vessels)	squadrone (m) squadron (cavalry, tanks)
suggerimento suggestion, piece of advice	suggestione suggestion (psychological); influence, instigation	
tavola plank; table (set for eating) e.g. a tavola = at/to the dinner table); table (with columns and rows) e.g. la tavola pitagorica = multiplication table; table (ancient law) e.g. le tavole della legge = the Tables of the Law; illustration in a book; tablet, panel	tavolo table = piece of furniture, for all purposes, e.g. tavolo da biliardo = pool table; tavolo da gioco = card table	tavolino small table, usu for writing or studying, desk; small table in a bar or a “caffè”
tavolato (R2–3) plank floor; paneling	tabulato (R2–3) tabulation	tabella table (arrangement of data in columns and rows)
televisione television (gen, including television set)	televisore television set	
tempestoso stormy	tempestivo timely	tempestato (R2–3) covered with, e.g. una corona tempestata di diamanti = a crown covered with diamonds
terra earth; land; soil; ground, e.g. per terra = on the ground	terreno (n) ground; terrain; soil; plot of land; (adj) worldly, earthly (as opposed to heavenly), e.g. vita terrena as opposed to vita eterna	terrestre (n) earthling; (adj) terrestrial, of the Earth; earthly, e.g. paradiso terrestre = Earthly Paradise; referring to land as opposed to sea
tónico (n) tonic, reconstituent; (adj) tonic	tonale (adj) tone-, tonal	

trattamento treatment	tratto stroke, line; section (of a road etc.)	trattato treaty; treatise	
ufficiale (m) official (= person with a position in a public office); officer (military); (adj) official	ufficioso (adj) semi-official, unofficial, e.g. in via ufficioso = unofficially		
ufficio office (also as a place); duty	officina workshop, small factory		
valido valid; strong	valoroso valorous, valiant	valente (R2–3) skilful	di valore valuable (objects); leading (persons)
veglia wakefulness, vigil, e.g. veglia funebre = wake	sveglia time for waking up, wake-up call, dare la sveglia a qc = to give sb a wake-up call; alarm clock		
vetro glass (material), sheet of glass, piece of broken glass	vetrata large window, usu with fixed panes; stained-glass window	vetrina shop window; show-case, glass-fronted cupboard	vetrino slide (for the microscope)
vincita win (lottery, gambling etc.)	vittoria victory (war, sport etc.)		
vizioso vicious, corrupt	viziato spoilt; vitiated		
votazione vote (= act of voting); mark, grade (school)	voto vow; vote, voting; mark, grade (school)		

2.3.2 Paronyms with similar meaning: misleading “alterati”

This is a special subset of cognate paronyms, some of which (e.g. **tavolo/tavolino**, **carro/carrello**) were included in the table above with other related words. As indicated in a separate chapter of this book (see chapter 5, Suffixes), many Italian nouns are alterations of existing words through suffixes but have meanings of their own. As a consequence, we have sets of paronyms in which the original value of the alteration has

been lost, giving rise to situations that are potentially confusing for the student. It must be stressed that the list given here is only a small sample.

busta envelope	bustarella (R1–2) bribe	bustina small paper packet with one dose of medicine or other substances, e.g. bustina di tè = tea-bag	
canna reed; cane, rod; barrel (gun); flue (chimney); pipe (organ); cross-bar (bicycle); (R1) joint (e.g. marijuana)	cannone (m) cannon	cannuccia straw (for drinks)	cannella (spout of a) tap, e.g. bere alla cannella = drink from the tap; cinnamon
casa house, home	casino (R1–2) brothel; (R1*–1) mess, confusion, racket		
forca hayfork, pitchfork; (usu) gallows	forcina hairpin	forcone (m) dung-fork, hayfork, pitchfork	forchetta fork (for eating)
mazzo bunch, bundle	mazzetta (R1–2) bundle of banknotes; (R1) bribe		
pane (m) bread	panino (usu) sandwich		
storia history; story	storiella joke NOTE: short story = novella		
vigna vineyard	vignetta illustration, cartoon		

2.4 Paronyms with different meanings

In the following list, the paronyms within each set are generally unrelated and their meanings quite different.

artéfice (m/f) artist, author, maker, creator	artificio artifice
---	------------------------------

atterrare (tr) to knock down; (intr) to land NOTE: to land on the moon = allunare ; on the sea = ammarare	atterrire to frighten	
calare (tr) to lower; (intr AUX essere) to descend	colare to filter; to drip, to ooze (also intr AUX essere)	
cànone (m) canon (mus., also = norm); rent, fee, e.g. il canone d'affitto = the rent	cannone (m) cannon; (fig, R1) è un cannone = he/she is very good (at sth)	canònico (n) canon (religious); (adj) canonical
commendatore honorary title; person with such title	commentatore annotator; commentator	
consigliare to advise, to counsel	conciliare to reconcile; to be conducive to; to (agree to) pay a fine on the spot	
consiglio advice; council, board (of directors etc)	concilio council (religious), e.g. concilio ecumenico = ecumenical council	
fango mud	fungo mushroom, toadstool, fungus	
feroce ferocious, savage, fierce	ferace (R3) fertile (also fig)	

R1* vulgar or indecent
R1 informal, colloquial
R2 neutral, unmarked
R3 formal, written
Italian words and expressions are R2 unless otherwise indicated. See also p. 5.

The gender of nouns is given only where it is not predictable from the principles given in ch. 14.

In some words, an accent is used to indicate the main stress but should not be used when writing. See p. 29.

The usual Italian pronunciation of foreign words is given in phonetic spelling in square brackets whenever appropriate.

folla crowd	folle (adj) mad (n m/f) mad person	
fondare to found	fóndere to smelt, to fuse, to melt	fèndere to split, to cleave, to cut through sth
greggio (adj) raw (n) crude oil	gregge (m) flock (of sheep), also fig NOTE: greggi (pl) is usu feminine	
inferire (R3) to infer; to inflict	infierire (su/contro qu) to act with ferocity against sb	
insolazione (R2–3) insolation, sunstroke	isolamento isolation; insulation	
marciare to march	marcire to rot	
messà Mass (religious)	messe (f) harvest	
negare to deny	annegare (tr/intr AUX essere) to drown	
parte (f) part, share, side	parto childbirth	
prodigio portent; prodigy, e.g. ragazzo prodigio = child prodigy, genius	pròdigo prodigal, e.g. il figliol prodigo = the prodigal son	
proposizione clause (gram.)	preposizione preposition	
rimediare (tr) to fix roughly; (R1) (to manage) to obtain sth; (intr) to put right (sth = a qc)	rammendare to mend, to darn	rammentare to remember; to remind (sb sth = a qu qc)
riporto number/amount carried over	rapporto report	

scala stairs, staircase, ladder; scale (in music, measurements, also fig); straight, run (cards)	scaglia scale (in animals); chip, flake	
scàndalo scandal, outrage	scandaglio sounding-line, sounding-lead	
schermare (R2–3) to screen, to shield	schermire (R3) (tr) to defend, to shield; (intr) to fence (sport)	schernire (R2–3) to scorn, to deride
teste (m/f) witness	testo text	testa head
tetto roof	tetta (R1*–1) tit	tettoia cover, roofed shelter
tono tone	tuono thunder	tonno tunny-fish, tuna

2.5 Verbs with similar stems

The following table is an indicative sample of a vast category of Italian verbs. The semantic differences generated by the use of different prefixes with common stems are at times subtle, at times surprisingly obvious, and are therefore potentially confusing for the student.

R1* vulgar or indecent
R1 informal, colloquial
R2 neutral, unmarked
R3 formal, written
Italian words and expressions are R2 unless otherwise indicated. See also p. 5.

The gender of nouns is given only where it is not predictable from the principles given in ch. 14.

In some words, an accent is used to indicate the main stress but should not be used when writing. See p. 29.

The usual Italian pronunciation of foreign words is given in phonetic spelling in square brackets whenever appropriate.

abbassare to lower (gen)	ribassare to lower (prices, rent etc.), e.g. ribassare i prezzi		
affrontare to confront, to face, to tackle	confrontare to compare		
battere to beat (gen, in an orderly way; also = to win); to strike; battere a macchina = to type; to serve (tennis etc.); battere un rigore/una punizione/un calcio d'angolo = to take a penalty/a free kick/a corner kick (football); to flap (wings)	sbattere to beat (in a rough way: rugs, eggs); to throw sb/sth against sth (contro qc); sbattere la porta = to slam the door; to bump (sth) against/into sth, e.g. ho sbattuto (la testa) contro il tavolo ; to flap (wings); sbattersene (R1*-1) = not to give a damn	battersi to hit oneself; to fight	imbattersi (in qu/quc) to run into sb, to come across sth
cacciare (tr) to hunt; to chase away, to throw out; to stuff (into sth); (intr) to go hunting; (refl.) to get to/into, e.g. cacciarsi nei guai = to get into trouble	scacciare to chase away, to throw out; to scatter		
cadere (intr AUX essere) to fall	decadere (intr AUX essere) to decline	ricadere (intr AUX essere) to fall again; to relapse, to backslide; (fig. of guilt, responsibility etc.) to fall, to rest	scadere (intr AUX essere) to expire; to fall due; to decline (in value)
cambiare (tr) to change (gen); (intr AUX essere) to change (gen); (intr AUX avere) (R1-2) to change gear; (refl) to get changed (clothes)	ricambiare (tr) (usu) to repay, to reciprocate (favours etc.); ALSO = to change again	scambiare to trade, to swap; to mistake sth/sb for sth/sb else (qc/qu per qc/qu altro)	

chiudere (tr) to close, to shut, to lock up; to turn off (tap); (intr) to close (schools, shops etc.); to close properly (doors, windows etc.)	richiudere to close again	rinchiudere to lock up (inside somewhere)	schiodere to open slightly and slowly, to part
cogliere to pick, to pluck; to grasp; to catch, e.g. cogliere di sorpresa = to catch by surprise; to hit, e.g. cogliere nel segno = to hit the target (also fig)	accogliere to receive, (sb); to accept (sth)	raccogliere to pick up (from the ground), to pluck (e.g. flowers, usu from the ground); to pick, to harvest (agricultural products); to gather	
colare (tr) to filter; to drip, to ooze (also intr AUX essere)	scolare (tr) to drain, e.g. scolare la pasta (intr AUX essere) to drain, to drip (R1, usu refl. to drink)		
conciliare to reconcile (= to harmonize); to be conducive to, e.g. una musica che concilia il sonno = a music conducive to sleep; to (agree to) pay a fine on the spot	riconciliare to reconcile (= to end a disagreement)		
conservare to save, to keep, to preserve	preservare to protect		
contare to count	raccontare to tell, to recount	scontare (qc) to discount; to deduct; to pay (the penalty for sth)	
correre (tr) to run (races, distances etc.), to race; (intr AUX essere or avere) to run (gen), to race	discorrere (intr) to talk, to converse (with sb = con qu)	scorrere (tr) to glance over (intr AUX essere) to flow; to glide; to pass (of time)	

ricorrere (intr AUX essere or avere) to have recourse, to resort (to sb/sth = a qu/qc); to occur (of anniversaries etc.); ALSO = to run again, to go back (also fig)	rincorrere (tr) to chase, to run after	
deferire (R2–3) to defer (= to refer)	differire (R2–3) (tr) to defer (= to postpone), to delay; (intr) to differ	
fondare to found	sfondare to break the bottom of sth, to wear (the bottom) out of sth; to crash through, to burst open, e.g. sfondare la porta	
gelare (tr/intr AUX essere) to freeze (natural phenomenon); (fig) to horrify	congelare (tr) to freeze (often artificially, e.g. food; also fig, of funds etc.)	surgelare (tr) to freeze, to deep-freeze (only food)
giudicare to judge	aggiudicare to award; to sell at auctions	pregiudicare to jeopardize; to damage; to prejudice
gustare to savour, to enjoy (usu of food, drinks, but also fig); to taste	degustare to sample, to taste (food, wine)	disgustare to disgust (also fig)
ispirare to inspire	inspirare (R2–3) to breathe in	
legare to tie (up), to fasten; to link	rilegare (usu) to bind (books); ALSO = to tie again	
mantenere to maintain, to keep; to provide livelihood	sostenere to support, to hold up (physically, morally); to bear (expenses, losses); (tr/intr) to maintain, to assert	
mollare to slacken, to let go; (R1) to give (slaps, kicks etc.), e.g. mollare uno schiaffo	ammollare to soak, to soften (by soaking); to slacken; (R1) to give (slaps, kicks etc.), e.g. ammollare uno schiaffo	
muovere to move (tr, not emotionally)	commuovere to touch, to move (emotionally)	

negare to deny (sb sth = qc a qu)		rinnegare to repudiate, to disown	
passare (tr) to pass (gen); to cross, to go through (also fig, e.g. passare un guaio); to overtake; to supply; to strain (food, drinks); (intr AUX essere) to pass (by)	oltrepassare to cross, to go beyond; to go past (esp stationary objects, people etc.); (fig) to exceed	ripassare (tr) to cross again, to pass again; to review (studying); (intr AUX essere) to pass (by) again	sorpassare to overtake (esp vehicles and other moving objects, people etc.); to grow taller/higher than sb/sth; (fig) to exceed
pesare (tr/intr AUX avere/essere) to weigh; (fig) to be a burden; (fig) to matter	soppesare (R2–3) (tr) to weigh up (esp fig = to value carefully in one's mind)		
porre to put (R2–3, less common than mettere), to set (down), e.g. porre freno/dei limiti = to set some limits, to curb	comporre to compose; to put together; to constitute, to make up, e.g. due giocatori compongono la squadra = two players make up the team	scomporre to disassemble, to break down; to upset	ricomporre to reassemble
portare to take, to bring, to carry; to wear (of clothes etc.)	sopportare to bear, to endure, to tolerate		
premere to press, to push (e.g. a button); (intr) to press (against sth/sb = contro qc/qu); (R2–3) to matter (a qu)	spremere to squeeze (usu fruit, but also fig of money etc.)	esprimere to express (opinions, thoughts, feelings etc.)	
provare to try; to test; to taste; to prove	approvare to approve (of sth = qc)	riprovare to try again; to taste again; (R2–3) to condemn	
rubare (qc) to steal (sth); to commit burglary, to be a thief	derubare (qu) to rob (sb)		

seguire (tr) to follow; (intr AUX essere) to follow, to come after (sth/sb = a qc/qu)	conseguire (tr) to achieve; (intr AUX essere) to ensue	perseguire to pursue; (R3) to prosecute (legally)	proseguire (tr/intr) to continue, to go on
vegliare (R2–3) to stay awake	svegliare (tr) to wake up (tr) NOTE to wake up (intr) = svegliarsi		
vendicare to avenge, to revenge	rivendicare to claim, to vindicate		
venire (intr AUX essere) to come	svenire (intr AUX essere) to faint	rivenire (intr AUX essere) to come again	rinvenire (tr) to find; (intr AUX essere) to regain consciousness

2.6 Gender paronyms

The gender difference dividing the following paronyms shows itself in the distinct endings of the nouns in each set. A short list in nouns distinguished *only* by gender (i.e. with identical endings) can be found in section 14.5.5.

2.6.1 Gender paronyms with similar meanings

Masculine	Feminine
animo seat of intellect, will and personality; courage	anima soul
banco long and narrow seat, pew; school desk; counter, bench (for working, testing etc.); bank (only in specific cases, e.g. Banco di Santo Spirito); NOTE: banco di sabbia = sand bank	banca bank (financial institution in general), e.g. vado in banca = I'm going to the bank; la Banca d'Italia

R1* vulgar or indecent
R1 informal, colloquial
R2 neutral, unmarked
R3 formal, written
Italian words and expressions are R2 unless otherwise indicated. See also p. 5.

The gender of nouns is given only where it is not predictable from the principles given in ch. 14.

In some words, an accent is used to indicate the main stress but should not be used when writing. See p. 29.

The usual Italian pronunciation of foreign words is given in phonetic spelling in square brackets whenever appropriate.

Masculine	Feminine
bilancio balance sheet, budget	bilancia weighing scales; la Bilancia = Libra
botto shot, crack, loud noise; botti (pl R1–2) = fireworks; di botto = suddenly	botta blow (also fig = damage); crash (noise); dare un sacco di botte a qu (R1–2) = to give sb a beating up
bozzo bump, swelling	bozza bump, swelling; draft, proof
briciolo (only s, fig) bit, scrap, e.g. non ha un briciolo di cervello (R1) = he/she doesn't have any brains	briciola crumb, left-over bit
buco hole (gen), e.g. un cappotto pieno di buchi = a coat full of holes; il buco della serratura = the keyhole	buca hole (usu in the ground), e.g. un strada piena di buche = a road full of holes NOTE, however: buca delle lettere = letter/mail box (hole); buca del suggeritore = prompter's box; buca del biliardo = pool table pocket
calcolatore calculator, computer	calcolatrice calculator
canonico canon (person)	canonica parsonage
caramello caramel	caramella sweet (UK), lolly (Aus), candy (US)
carico loading; load	carica charge (electrical; military); office, position, rank
cassetto drawer	cassetta (small) case; cassette (video, audio)

Masculine	Feminine
cerchio circle	cerchia (R3) large, circular shaped structure, e.g. cerchia di mura = circle of walls, cerchia di montagne = ring of mountains; set of people bound by some kind of relationship, e.g. una ristretta cerchia di amici = a select group of friends
cero votive candle; large candle for religious purposes, e.g. il cero pasquale = the Paschal Candle	cera wax; polish (for shoes, floors, wooden furniture)
corso course; main street	corsa race, run, rush
coscio leg of larger butchered animals	coscia thigh; leg of butchered animals (gen)
covo den, lair; hiding place (with negative connotations)	cova (R3) brooding, brooding place, brooding time
critico critic	critica criticism, critique, review
fallo foul (sport); (R2–3) mistake, fault; (R3) phallus	falla leak, hole (in ships, boats etc.), also fig
foglio sheet, leaf of paper	foglia leaf
fosso ditch; moat	fossa hole in the ground; grave
frutto piece of fruit; (fig) fruit, product, earning, profit	frutta fruit (collective, in general and as part of a meal), e.g. frutta di stagione = fruit in season, essere alla frutta = to be at the end of the meal (ALSO [fig] = to be well past one's prime)
gambo stem, stalk (flowers, mushrooms)	gamba leg (humans, clothes, furniture)

Masculine	Feminine
gelato ice-cream	gelata frost (a single occurrence of frost, for instance during one night)
goccio drop (fig), a small amount of liquid, e.g. un goccio di vino = a very small amount of wine to drink	goccia drop (lit)
grano wheat, grain (also measurement)	grana (R1–2) trouble; (R1) dough (money); (R3) grain (in photographs) NOTE: il grana (padano) = a hard cheese similar to Parmesan
legno wood (material)	legna firewood
modo way, manner, method; mood (gram.)	moda fashion, e.g. alla moda = in fashion, fashionable
moro Moor; dark-skinned/haired man	mora dark-skinned/haired woman, brunette; mulberry, blackberry; (R2–3) delay or default (in paying rent, fees etc.), and also the related penalty fee
morso bite; morsel; bit (horse)	morsa vice (tool); (fig) (vice-like) grip
palmo (hand) span	palma palm of the hand; palm tree
pendolo pendulum	pendola pendulum clock, grandfather clock
peso weight	pesa weighing; weigh-house; weigh-bridge
pezzo piece, bit, fragment	pezza piece of fabric, cloth, rag; patch
politico politician	politica politics, policy

Masculine	Feminine
pozzo well	pozza puddle
regolo (calcolatore) slide ruler	regola rule
sinistro (R2–3) accident; left punch/shot (sport)	sinistra left hand
stecco twig, stick	stecca picket (on a gate); whalebone (corset); rib (umbrella); cue (billiard); slat (shutters, fan); splint (for fractured limbs); carton of cigarettes; false note (esp singing, as in prendere una stecca)
suolo soil; ground	suola sole (of shoes)
tavolato plank floor; paneling	tavolata group of people sitting at the table for lunch/dinner together, e.g. una tavolata di amici
terno set of three winning numbers in the game of lotto, e.g. vincere un terno al lotto = to hit the jackpot	terna (R2–3) set of three, trio (not mus.)
terzino fullback (football)	terzina (R2–3) tercet (poetry); triplet (music)

2.6.2 Gender paronyms with different meanings

Masculine	Feminine
arco bow; arch; arc	arca ark; (R2–3) sarcophagus
armo (R3) crew (sailing, rowing)	arma weapon
baleno lightning	balena whale
ballo dance, ball	balla bale; (R1) tall story

Masculine	Feminine
bando (R2–3) announcement, notice; ban	banda band (musical, radio); gang; stripe
bombo (R3) kind of bumble-bee	bomba bomb
branco group of animals (herd, flock pack); (fig) bunch/pack of persons (derogatory, e.g. branco di idioti = bunch of idiots)	branca claw, clutches; branch (also fig of sciences, disciplines etc., e.g. una branca della medicina = a branch of medicine)
busto bust; corset; bodice	busta envelope
capriolo roe deer, roebuck	capriola (usu) somersault; (less frequent) female roe deer
cartello sign; placard; cartel (econ.)	cartella briefcase, schoolbag; file, folder; page
caso fate, chance; case, instance; case (gram.); fare caso a qc/qu = to notice sth/sb	casa home, house
collo neck	colla glue
colpo blow, stroke, shot, e.g. bel colpo! = good shot!	colpa guilt; fault, e.g. è colpa tua = it's your fault
costo cost	costa coast
fico fig, fig tree	fica (R1*) cunt
filo thread	fila row, line, queue, e.g. fare la fila = to queue (up), to line (up) (US)
fisico physicist; physique, body	fisica physics
gropo (R2–3) tangle; avere un gropo in gola = to have a lump in one's throat	groppa back, rump; in groppa (a qu) = on sb's shoulders, on sb's back

Masculine	Feminine
lancio launch, launching (of rockets, missiles etc.; of products on the market); throw, throwing (gen); jump, drop (with a parachute); introduction (of e.g. an actor)	lancia launch (boat); lance, spear
limo (R3) mud, slime, silt	lima file (tool)
lotto lotto, State lottery	lotta fight, struggle; wrestling
manico handle	manica sleeve; la Manica = the English Channel
mazzo bundle, bunch; pack (cards)	mazza cudgel; mace; club (golf); bat (baseball, cricket); stick (hockey)
mento chin	menta mint (herb)
mostro monster; (R1) phenomenon, e.g. è un mostro! = he/she is a phenomenon (= he/she is incredibly good at something)	mostra exhibition, show
moto motion; movement; physical exercise, e.g. fare un po' di moto = to take some exercise; (R2–3) uprising NOTE: moto (f) is short for motocicletta = motorcycle	mota (R3) mud
palo post, pole; goal-post (sport)	pala shovel; blade (propeller, oar)
panno cloth	panna cream
partito (usu) party (politics)	partita game, match (sport, cards); lot, shipment, consignment
pianto weeping, crying	pianta plant (as in tree etc.)

Masculine	Feminine
picco peak, pinnacle	picca pike; picche (only pl) = spades (cards)
polpo octopus	polpa pulp
porto port, harbour	porta door
posto place, spot; seat; position, job; space, room, e.g. non c'è posto = there is no room	posta post, mail
punto point (gen); dot; full stop, period; stitch	punta point, tip, sharp end; touch, trace; (fig) peak, maximum level; ora di punta = rush hour
pupillo (R2–3) favourite; (R3) ward, pupil	pupilla pupil (eye) (ALSO = feminine of pupillo)
raspo grape-stalk	raspa rasp
razzo ['raddzo] rocket	razza ['raddza] (sting-)ray NOTE: razza ['rattsa] = race, breed; sort, kind
romanzo (n) novel; (adj) Romance	romanza romanza
scalo port, airport; stop-over, e.g. volo senza scalo = non-stop flight	scala stairs, staircase, ladder; scale (mus. and fig); straight, run (cards)
tasso rate, e.g. tasso d'interesse = interest rate; badger	tassa tax, fee
testo text	testa head
tetto roof	tetta (R1*-1) tit
tormento torment	tormenta blizzard, snowstorm

Masculine	Feminine
tòrto wrong; avere torto = to be (in the) wrong	tórta cake
velo veil (also fig); thin layer (of sugar, dust etc.)	vela sail

2.7 Deceptive minimal pairs

For the English-speaking person the differences separating the paronyms in this section can be difficult to hear and/or pronounce. They are:

- (1) **è** [ɛ] *vs* **é** [e]
- (2) **ò** [ɔ] *vs* **ó** [o]
- (3) single *vs* double consonant
- (4) position of the stress

With the obvious exception of (3), in most cases these differences do not show in the written language. Furthermore, all of them, including (3), often disappear, according to different patterns, in regional varieties of spoken Italian (cf. section 1.6). Nevertheless, the advanced student of Italian should be aware of their existence in the standard variety, since to overlook them could lead to confusion, as shown by the tables below.

- While the pronunciation of some words has been given in square brackets, it should be recalled that the conventional rules on written stresses have been applied to all Italian words in bold.
- Minimal pairs that are less likely, in context, to lead to misunderstanding have been excluded: hence the absence of sets of paronyms containing a verb and a word from a different category (noun etc.), e.g. **mente** ['mente], from **mentire**, *to lie*, and **mente** ['mente] (f), *mind*; **è** [ɛ], from **essere** *he/she/it is*, and **e** [e], conjunction, *and*; **ho** [ɔ], from **avere**, *I have*, and **o** [o], conjunction, *or*. An exception has been made for the single/double consonant group, since native speakers are on the whole more sensitive to this type of opposition, and less 'forgiving' towards mispronounced words of this kind.

R1* vulgar or indecent
R1 informal, colloquial
R2 neutral, unmarked
R3 formal, written
 Italian words and expressions are R2 unless otherwise indicated. See also p. 5.

The gender of nouns is given only where it is not predictable from the principles given in ch. 14.

In some words, an accent is used to indicate the main stress but should not be used when writing. See p. 29.

The usual Italian pronunciation of foreign words is given in phonetic spelling in square brackets whenever appropriate.

Table 2.7.1 *è vs é*

è [ɛ] pesca ['peska] peach	é [e] pesca ['peska] fishing
venti ['venti] winds (pl of vento)	venti ['venti] twenty
re [rɛ] D (musical note)	re [re] king
tè (the) [tɛ] tea	te [te] you

Table 2.7.2 *ò vs ó*

ò [ɔ] botte ['botte] blows (pl of botta)	ó [o] botte ['botte] (f) cask, barrel
colto ['kɔlto] picked-up; plucked; caught (p.p. of cogliere)	colto ['kolto] well educated, learned
corso ['kɔrsɔ] Corsican	corso ['korso] course; main street
dotto ['dɔtto] learned	dotto ['dotto] (R3) duct
foro ['fɔro] forum	foro ['fɔro] hole
torta ['tɔrta] twisted (f p.p. of torcere)	torta ['torta] cake

- In view of the point made above, the very small number of Italian words differing only in the pronunciation of **s** [s/z] or **z** [tʃ/dz] has not been included.

For some consonants, minimal pairs of this kind do not exist; for others they are very few and of such a nature that they cannot be a source of confusion. This explains why they are not represented in the following list. Minimal pairs do not exist for the letters **z** and for the groups **gl**, **gn**, **sc**.

With regard to the spoken language, it should be pointed out that by taking into account contextual elements – such as, for instance, the definite article – new sets of potentially misleading “pairs” can be generated, e.g. **l’arena** (the arena) – **la renna** (the reindeer).

The phenomenon exemplified in table 2.7.4 can be observed in a number of verbal forms, as a regular feature of the first conjugation:

1 s present indicative *vs* 3 s *passato remoto* (e.g. **amo**, *I love*, *vs* **amò**, *he/she/it loved*);

and also in forms from different verbs, e.g.:

capito ['kapito], **capitò** [kapi'tò], both from **capitare**, *to happen*,
and **capito** [ka'pito] from **capire**, *to understand*.

The semantic pattern seen below in the two forms of **bisbiglio** and **gorgheggio** applies also to other less common words.

Table 2.7.3 *Single vs double consonant*

Single consonant	Double consonant
ano anus	anno year
avito (R3) ancestral	avvito I screw (in/down) (from avvitare)
baco caterpillar, grub	Bacco Bacchus
cade he/she/it falls (from cadere)	cadde he/she/it fell (from cadere)
camino chimney	cammino journey, walk; path; way
caro dear	carro cart, waggon, chariot
casa house, home	cassa crate
colèrico related to cholera, choleric	collèrico hot-tempered, angry
coma (m) coma	comma (m R2–3) sub-section (leg.)
copia copy; (R3) abundance	coppia couple
dici you say (2 s pres. indic dire)	dicci tell us (2 s imperative dire)
loto lotus	lotto lotto, State lottery
luci lights (pl of luce [f])	lucci pikes (fish) (pl of luccio)
mora dark-skinned/haired woman, brunette; mulberry, blackberry; (R2–3) delay or default (in paying rent, fees etc.), and also the related penalty fee	morra morra (game)

Table 2.7.3 (*cont.*)

Single consonant	Double consonant
nono/-a ninth	nonno/-a grandfather/grandmother
note notes (pl of nota)	notte (f) night
pala shovel	palla ball
papa (m) Pope	pappa mush, child's food
tufo tufa (rock)	tuffo dive; dip

Table 2.7.4 *Position of tonic stress*

ambito ['ambito] circumscribed space; (fig) scope, circle	ambito (R2–3) [am'bito] (p.p. of ambire) coveted
balia ['balia] wet nurse	balia (R3) [ba'lia] power, usu in the expression in balia di qu/qc (R2) = in the hands of sb, at the mercy of sth
bisbiglio [bi'zbiλλo] whisper	bisbiglio [bizbiλ'lio] frequent, continuous whispering
calamita [kala'mita] magnet (also fig)	calamità [kalami'ta] calamity, disaster
casino [ka'sino] (R1–2) brothel; (R1*–1) mess, confusion, racket	casinò [kasi'nò] casino
compito ['kompito] task, homework	compito (R2–3) [kom'pito] usu well-mannered, polite, but also completed (from compire)
cupido (R3) ['kupido] covetous, greedy; lustful	Cupido, cupido [ku'pido] Cupid; any image of Cupid, putto
formica ['fɔrmika] Formica	formica [for'mika] ant
gorgheggio [gor'geddʒo] trill, trilling (in singing); warble	gorgheggio [gorged'dʒio] continuous trill/warble
maneggio [ma'neddʒo] handling; riding ground	maneggio [maned'dʒio] bustling, fussing about

Table 2.7.4 (*cont.*)

meta ['meta] goal, destination	metà [me'ta] half
nocciolo ['nɔttʃolo] stone, kernel, pip	nocciolo [not'tʃɔlo] hazel-nut tree
papa (m) ['papa] Pope	papà (m) [pa'pa] daddy
para (f) ['para] (R2–3) Para (type of rubber, commonly used for shoe soles)	parà (m) [pa'ra] paratrooper
pattino ['pattino] (roller-)skate, (ice-)skater	pattino [pat'tino] small craft with two hulls, propelled by oars, used mostly for pleasure
principi ['printʃipi] princes (from principe)	principi [prin'tʃipi] principles (from principio)
retina ['retina] retina	retina [re'tina] small net, hairnet
scia ['ʃia] wake, trail (of boats etc., also fig)	scià [ʃa] Shah
Sofia ['sɔfja] Sofia, Sofiya (capital of Bulgaria)	Sofia [so'fia] Sophia, Sophie (name of person)

2.8 Other types of misleading similarities

The above misleading similarities between Italian and English are of a superficial kind. In some cases, however, the danger lurks at a deeper level, hidden in the apparently similar semantic structure of words or expressions in the two languages. The following examples should suffice to keep the student on the alert.

English	Italian	Italian	English
at large	in libertà; (= at length) per esteso, diffusamente	al largo alla larga	offshore (fig); with verbs like stare or tenersi = (to keep) away from sth/sb, e.g. stare alla larga da qu/quc = to stay clear of sb/sth; alla larga! (R1) = keep (it) away!

English	Italian	Italian	English
at length	esaurientemente, per esteso; (= finally) alla fine	a lungo alla lunga	for a long time in the long run
big head	to have a big head = essere presuntuoso	testone	blockhead; stubborn
downhill	(lit) (giù) a valle, in discesa BUT (fig) to go downhill = andare in declino/semprè peggioro, e.g. since then it's been downhill, for him = da allora le cose sono andate sempre peggioro, per lui	in discesa	(lit) downhill BUT (fig) da allora è stato tutto (or la strada è stata tutta) in discesa, per lui (R1–2) = since then everything has been easy, for him
horny	(= horned) cornuto; (= made of horn) di corno; (skin) incallito; (= sexually excited) assatanato (R1), arrapato (R1), eccitato sessualmente, lascivo (R3)	cornuto	(R1*-1, usu) cuckold, betrayed; (lit R3) horned NOTE: to avoid misunderstanding, the expression con le corna is used for the literal meaning
point-blank	(adj/adv) (lit, of shooting) a bruciapelo; (fig) senza mezzi termini	di punto in bianco	suddenly, unexpectedly, out of the blue

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

Real synonyms – in the sense of unconditionally interchangeable words with the same meaning – are very rare in Italian as in other languages. Consequently, when looking for the Italian counterpart of an English term in a dictionary, students are usually confronted with a list of words or expressions that are not perfectly equivalent. This section highlights these differences of meaning or use in a number of common “semantic fields,” which have been listed according to their English heading.

In some cases, the cells containing the most common Italian words for a particular heading have been highlighted.

ACCIDENT

	incidente (m)				
		disgrazia			
contrattempo intoppo impediment imprevisto unforeseen difficulty	infortunio unfortunate event; sport injury	sinistro (R3 esp insurance) harmful event scontro collision	sventura sciagura	disastro calamità catàstrofe (f) often due to natural causes, usu many people affected	

minor ←————→ *serious*

R1* vulgar or indecent
R1 informal,
colloquial
R2 neutral, unmarked
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3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

TO AGREE

<i>with somebody</i>	
to be in agreement (with sb on sth)	essere d'accordo (con qu su qc) convenire (con qu su qc) (R2-3)
to come to an agreement (with sb on sth)	mettersi d'accordo (con qu su qc) accordarsi (con qu su qc)
to get along (with sb)	andare d'accordo (con qu)
to suit (sb) (gen) to be good for sb's health	confarsi (a qu) (R3); addirsi (a qu) (R3) far bene (a qu); giovare (a qu) (R2-3)
<i>to something</i>	
to consent (to sth)	acconsentire (a qc)
<i>of things</i>	
to correspond (to sth) to tally (with sth) to agree (with sth) (gram.)	corrispondere (a qc) concordare (con qc) concordare (con qc) BUT agreement (gram.) = accordo
<i>to agree + infinitive</i>	
to agree to do sth (two or more people) to accept to do sth to consent to do sth	concordare di fare qc accettare di fare qc acconsentire di/a fare qc
<i>to agree + clause</i>	
to agree that ... (two or more people) to accept that ... to admit that ... to consent that ...	concordare che ... accettare che ... ammettere che ... acconsentire che ...

TO ANNOY

R1*	R1	R2	R3
	dar fastidio (a qu)		
	dare noia (a qu) to annoy seccare to bother disturbare to disturb		importunare, incomodare, recare disturbo/fastidio (a qu) to inconvenience
rompere (le scatole) (a qu) to annoy intensely		infastidire to pester molestare to harass	
rompere le palle/i coglioni/il cazzo (a qu) to annoy profoundly, to give (sb) the shits, to piss sb off	scocciare to bother, to pester	irritare, innervorsire to get on sb's nerves	
		affliggere to afflict (also fig), to trouble tormentare to torture (esp fig)	

TO GET ANGRY

R1*	R1	R2	R3
	arrabbiarsi		
	perdere la pazienza to lose one's patience		
incavolarsi, incacchiarsi		perdere le staffe to lose one's temper	
		infuriarsi, imbestialirsi, andare su tutte le furie to get furious	adirarsi
incazzarsi	andare in bestia to get furious		indignarsi to become indignant

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

APPEARANCE (*see also* FACE)

<i>external appearance</i>	apparenza usu of things	aspetto
<i>bearing</i>	portamento (R2-3)	
<i>look</i>	aria usu of persons: air, demeanour	look [luk] (m R1-2) in terms of fashion
<i>act of appearing</i>	comparsa	apparizione (R2-3) supernatural
<i>appearance in court</i>	comparizione (R3)	
<i>publication</i>	pubblicazione	uscita

TO ASK

<i>question</i>	<i>demand or request</i>	
chiedere qc a qu to ask sb sth domandare qc a qu to ask sb sth fare/porre (R3) una domanda (a qu) to ask (sb) a question interrogare to question, to interrogate; to test orally at school	to ask	chiedere qc a qu (sb for sth) di + inf (to do sth) a qc di + inf (sb to do sth) che + subj (that ...)
	to ask officially (as in writing), to apply (for sth)	fare richiesta/domanda (R2-3) a qu/presso qu (R3) (to sb) di/per qc (for sth)
	to request	richiedere (as chiedere)
	to request urgently	sollecitare (R3) qc da parte di qu (sth by sb) qu a + inf (to urge sb to do sth)
	to claim	rivendicare (R2-3), reclamare (R2-3)
	to demand	esigere, pretendere qc da qu (sth from sb) di + inf (to do sth) che + subj (that ...)
	to beg sb to do sth	pregare qu di + inf supplicare, scongiurare, implorare (R2-3) (constructed as pregare , but stronger in meaning)

BACK (n)

<i>of persons</i>	schiena, dorso (R2-3) spalle (f pl) (lit ‘shoulders’) esp in fig expressions, e.g. alle/dietro le spalle di qu = behind sb’s back
<i>of animals</i>	schiena
<i>of pack animals</i>	groppa (on sb’s back = in groppa a qu)
<i>of hands</i>	dorso BUT backhand (sport) = rovescio
<i>of coins, fabric etc.</i>	rovescio
<i>of pages etc</i>	retro (only s, R3)
<i>of clothes</i>	dietro (only s), didietro (usu s); BUT back to front/inside out = alla rovescia
<i>of houses, shops etc</i>	retro (only s, R2-3), dietro (only s), didietro (usu s), parte (f) posteriore
<i>of chairs etc</i>	schienale (m), spalliera
<i>of interiors</i>	fondo
<i>in sports</i>	difensore

BALL

<i>general</i>	palla ball		sfera (R2-3) sphere
<i>specific</i>	<i>sport and games</i>	pallone (m) football, basketball etc ALSO pallone (aerostatico) = air balloon	palloncino balloon
		pallina small ball, e.g. pallina da ping pong	
		bilia/biglia billiard ball, marble	boccia bowl boccino, pallino jack
	<i>body parts</i>	bulbo/globo oculare (R3) eye-ball	coglione (m R1*) palla (R1*-1) testicolo (R2-3) testicle
	<i>other</i>	globo (R2-3) globe il globo terrestre (R2-3)/ terracqueo (R3) the globe	palla di fucile/pistola, pallottola, proiettile (m) bullet palla (di cannone) cannon ball
		cuscinetto (a sfera) (R3) ball-bearing	gomitolo ball of wool

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

BEAUTIFUL

general			
R1*	R1	R2	R3
	bello		
	carino nice, cute, pretty		
figo/fico		grazioso pretty, cute	
			leggiadro fair, graceful
particular meanings			
pleasant	R1	R2	R3
	piacevole		
		gradevole	
			ameno usu of places
very beautiful	bellissimo		
	magnifico magnificent		
	meraviglioso wonderful		
			mirabile wondrous
	stupendo stupendous		
		splendido splendid	
		incantevole delightful	
		delizioso delightful, very pretty ALSO delicious	
attractive persons/things	attraente		
	affascinante charming, fascinating		
		seducente seductive	
			ammaliante bewitching
only persons		avvenente attractive formoso shapely piacente likeable	
only things		allettante tempting	

BEHIND, BACKSIDE

	R1*	R1	R2	R3
<i>bottom</i>	culo arse, ass	sedere		
		didietro (usu s)		
			fondo schiena, posteriore	
				deretano
<i>buttocks</i>	chiappe (f pl)			
		nàtiche (f pl)		glùtei (m pl)

BIG

big, great (dimensions; importance, excellence, cf. 18.4)	grande
big, large (mass or volume; importance)	grosso

BOAT

barca boat		nave (f) ship	
barca a vela/barca a motore sailing boat/motorboat		nave da guerra/nave passeggeri warship/liner	
		bastimento (old fashioned) ship, cargo-ship	
		vascello (R2-3) vessel, (war)ship (usu old type, with sails)	
		veliero sailing ship	
		legno (R3) ship (usu old type, wooden, with sails, oars)	
battello boat battello pneumatico (R2-3)/battello a vapore inflatable boat/steamboat			
imbarcazione (R2-3) craft			transatlantico (transatlantic) liner
	traghetto ferry		
canotto (R1-2) inflatable boat	motoscafo motorboat	vaporetto motor boat for public transport (esp in Venice)	
canoa canoe	fuoribordo outboard motorboat		
lancia (R2-3) launch			
scialuppa di salvataggio lifeboat			

small ←————→ *large*

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

BOTTLE

<i>general</i>	bottiglia	
	bottiglietta small bottle	bottiglione (m) large bottle
<i>specific</i>	fiasco glass container, usu for wine, with a narrow neck and the round bottom externally covered with straw or other fibres that allow it to stand	fiasca/fiaschetta flask, usu glass or leather, flat in shape, once used also for gunpowder
	borraccia water-bottle, canteen	biberon (m) [bibe'rɒn] baby bottle
	bocchetta small bottle, usu glass, for perfume etc	ampolla (R3) cruet (esp for oil and vinegar); ampulla
	flacone (m R2-3) small bottle, usu for medicine, perfume or cosmetic	

BOY, GIRL

There is a wealth of regional or local words meaning “child,” “boy,” “girl.” They are very often used at the lower registers.

figlio/-a son/daughter			
bambino/-a baby, child		ragazzo/-a boy/girl	
neonato/-a newborn baby	pupo/-a (R1-2 Roman)	adolescente (m/f R2-3) adolescent	signorina young lady
lattante (m/f) (suckling) baby	bimbo/-a (R2-3) baby, child		
poppante (m/f) (suckling) baby; (R1) whippersnapper	marmocchio (R1-2)	teen-ager (m/f) [ti'nedʒer] teenager	giovanotto young man
	fanciullo/-a (R3)		
	pàrgolo/-a (R3)		
	fantolino/-a (R3)		
piccino/-a (R1-2)	frugoletto/-a (R3) child	garzone (m) shop boy; (R3) boy	giovane (m/f) young man/woman
piccolo/-a baby, small child			
bebè (m) baby	creatura child, creature		
infante (m/f R3) infant, baby	ragazzino/-a young boy/girl		
moccioso/-a (R1-2) (snotty) child (insulting)	monello street urchin	ragazzaccio/-a bad boy/girl	

younger ←————→ older

TO BREAK (tr) (*see also* TO DAMAGE; TO DESTROY)

- Those verbs whose reflexive form provides the corresponding intransitive meaning are followed by **(-si)** (*see also* section 24.5).

	R1	R2	R3
<i>general</i>	rompere (-si)		
<i>specific</i>	spezzare (-si) to break (up), e.g. spezzare il pane = to break the bread		
	spaccare (-si) to crack open, to split, to cleave		
	fare a pezzi to break/cut/pull/tear to pieces		
	spezzettare to break/cut/chop into pieces		
		sminuzzare to break/cut/chop into small pieces	
	sfasciare (-si) to wreck, to shatter		schiantare (-si) to smash (violently)
	scassare (-si) to break, to smash, usu of mechanical contraptions (car, bicycle, clock etc.)	incrinare (-si) to crack, to produce a crack in sth	
	fracassare (-si) to smash, to shatter		infrangere (-si) to shatter (esp of glass), to break (fig, a promise, a rule etc.)
		frantumare (-si)/mandare in frantumi to smash (to pieces), to shatter	

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

TO CLIMB

<i>transitive (AUX avere)</i>		<i>intransitive (AUX essere)</i>
salire	limited to very few DO, eg salire le scale = to climb/to go up the stairs salire i gradini = to climb the steps	absolute or followed by a destination = to go/come/get up, to rise (also of prices, temperature etc.) salire su qc = to climb (on) sth
arrampicarsi		arrampicarsi (su qc) = to climb (sth), eg a mountain, a tree etc
montare (R2-3)	same as salire , with the addition of animals (e.g. horses) as possible DO (= to ride, to mount)	montare (usu followed by a destination) = to get up, to climb on sth, esp animals (= to mount, to ride) montare su qc = to climb (on) sth
scalare (R2-3)	(usu mountains) = to ascend ALSO (R3) = to climb with ladders, to scale (walls etc.)	
ascendere (R3)	(rare, usu mountains) = to ascend	only in expressions like ascendere al/in cielo = to ascend into heaven ascendere al trono = to ascend the throne

COMPETITION

competizione competition (usu not abstr.), contest (gen, often sport)	concorrenza economic competition ALSO: la concorrenza = the competition, i.e. the competitors	rivalità competition (abstract), rivalry
concorso competition (usu test or exam) for a job ALSO concorso ippico = horse jumping contest concorso di bellezza = beauty contest concorso a premi = advertising competition (with prizes)	gara contest (usu sports), race (of all kinds) ALSO gara d'appalto = tender for contract fare a gara = to vie with each other	
partita match (most ball games, eg football, tennis etc) game (cards and most board games)	incontro match (most ball games; boxing, fencing)	

CRIME

crimine (m) serious crime (gen)	delitto serious crime, often murder; also fig = real pity	reato (R2-3 leg) crime, offence
misfatto (R3) crime, misdeed (gen)	colpa fault (both abstract and concrete); ALSO = guilt; blame dare la colpa a qu di qc = to blame sb for sth	peccato sin
infrazione (R3 leg) infraction, breach	contravvenzione (R3 leg) infringement, offence (R1-2) fine	
trasgressione (R3 leg) transgression	violazione (R2-3 leg) violation, infringement	
inosservanza (R3 leg) failure to comply with given laws/rules	fallo foul, fault (sport) ALSO essere in fallo (R3) = to be at fault cadere in fallo (R3) = to err cogliere in fallo qu (R2-3) = to catch sb out	

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

TO CUT

<i>to cut (gen)</i>	tagliare
<i>to cut down (trees)</i> <i>(figurative)</i>	abbattere to cut down (of trees) ridurre to reduce, to cut down (fig, esp econ.)
<i>to cut into</i>	incidere to cut into, to carve, to engrave; ALSO to record (e.g. incidere un disco) intagliare to carve, to engrave
<i>to cut off (gen)</i> <i>(body parts)</i> <i>(tips)</i> <i>(branches)</i>	mozzare (R2-3) to chop off (with one sharp blow), also of body parts as a punishment, e.g. mozzare il capo ; ALSO (fig): da mozzare il fiato (used as adj) = breathtaking troncare (R2-3) to chop off, to snap off, to truncate recidere (R3) to cut off amputare (R2-3) to amputate, to cut off body parts (med.) mutilare (R2-3) to mutilate, to cut sb's limbs/body parts, violently or by accident spuntare to cut the tip off, to trim, to clip (esp of hair, plants) potare to prune
<i>to cut short</i>	accorciare to shorten (gen) abbreviare (R2-3) to shorten (with reference to time)
<i>to cut through</i>	fendere (R3) (usu present or imperfect) to cleave, to cut through, to plough through
<i>to cut up into bits</i> <i>into slices</i> <i>into sections</i>	tritare to chop up, to mince tagliuzzare (R1-2) to cut into small bits, to chop up trinciare (R2-3) to cut into bits, to chop (up) affettare to cut into slices, to slice tranciare (R3) to cut into large slices (usu fish); ALSO: to cut in a sharp and decisive way sezionare to divide into sections; ALSO: (R3 med.) to dissect dissecare (R3 med.) to dissect
<i>to cut = to mow</i> <i>to cut = to shave</i> <i>to cut = to shear</i>	falciare to cut grass, hay etc; ALSO (fig) = to mow down, to kill radere to shave (tr; intr = radersi) rasare (R2-3) to shave (tr; intr = rasarsi); ALSO: to level out (hedge), to mow (lawn) tosare to shear (sheep etc); ALSO: to mow

TO DAMAGE, TO SPOIL (*see also* TO BREAK; TO DESTROY)

<i>general</i>	danneggiare : to damage	
	sciupare to ruin, to spoil	deteriorare (R3) to deteriorate, to damage
	guastare (R2-3) to ruin, to spoil, usu in an abstract sense; ALSO (with mechanical devices as DO): to break	alterare to change for the worse; ALSO to change
<i>shape or aspect</i>	deformare to deform	storpiare to cripple, to disfigure; ALSO (fig) to pronounce badly
	sfigurare (R2-3) to disfigure	deturpare (R3) to deface
<i>food</i>	adulterare (R3) to adulterate, to alter (usu foodstuffs, eg wine) for personal advantage; often used in the past participle as an adjective	avariare (R3) to spoil (usu food, with external agents as subjects, e.g. heat, humidity etc.); past participle often used as an adjective
<i>character</i>	viziare to spoil (e.g. a child)	corrompere to corrupt
<i>on purpose</i>	sabotare (R2-3) to sabotage	
<i>= to harm</i>	nuocere a qu/qc (R2-3) to damage sb/sth, to harm sb/sth	

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

TO DEFEAT, TO BEAT, TO WIN

vincere (intr/tr) to win (gen), used intransitively or with a DO referring to the “context” of the victory eg la guerra, or the prize e.g. la medaglia d’oro or, less frequently, the opponent (usu abstract) e.g. la paura (in the case of persons contro qu is more common)	
battere qu/qc to beat sb/sth (opponent, record; in sport, games, contests etc, but usu not war); ALSO: to hit; to serve (sport)	
sconfiggere qu/qc (R2-3) to defeat sb/sth (often in war, but also in sport, and fig, e.g. il male)	
avere la meglio (su qu/qc) to come off better (against sb/sth)	trionfare (su qu/qc) to triumph (over sb/sth)
	stravincere (intr/tr) (R1-2) to win/to beat hands down (usu in sport, games, contests), constructed as vincere
piegare qu (R2-3) to subdue sb; ALSO (lit R2) to fold, to bend (usu qc)	stracciare qu (R1) to lick sb (sport, games, contests); ALSO (lit R2) to tear (paper, fabric etc)
	sgominare qu (R2-3) sbaragliare qu (R2-3) to put to flight, usu militarily, with plural or collective nouns as DO
sottomettere qu to subdue sb, to bring sb under one’s control	
	assoggettare qu (R2-3) soggiogare qu (R3) to subjugate sb
conquistare qc to conquer sth (e.g. territory, a city etc) militarily or with the use of force; ALSO to achieve sth through hard work NOTE: conquistare qu = to win sb over, to win sb’s love	

weaker ← ————— → *stronger*

TO DESTROY (*see also* TO BREAK; TO DAMAGE)

<i>general</i>	distruggere
<i>to demolish</i>	demolire to demolish (building etc.) far crollare qc to cause sth to collapse (also with hostile intentions) buttar giù (R1-2) to pull down (building, tree etc.) abbattere to pull down (wall, tree etc.) smantellare (R2-3) to dismantle
<i>to raze</i>	radere al suolo to raze to the ground spianare to flatten, to raze to the ground; ALSO to level
<i>to lay waste</i>	devastare
<i>to undo</i>	disfare
<i>to annihilate</i>	annichilire/annichilare (R 3), annientare disintegrare (R2-3) to disintegrate (tr) polverizzare (R2-3) to pulverize incenerire to incinerate, to reduce to ashes sterminare to exterminate (living creatures)

DIRTY

<i>general</i>	sporco dirty, also fig, morally dirty, e.g. denaro sporco (fruit of unlawful activities); indecent (shows, jokes etc.)	
	lercio filthy (stronger than sporco), also fig, morally dirty	
	sudicio dirty, also fig, indecent, morally dirty	
	sozzo ['sottso] (R2-3), zozzo ['tsottso] (R1, Center, South) dirty; (fig) indecent (usu shows, jokes)	
	lurido (R2-3) filthy (stronger than sporco), also fig, morally filthy, indecent	
	immondo (R3) filthy (stronger than sporco), often fig, morally filthy	
	lordo (R3) soiled, also fig, morally dirty	
	sordido (R3) dirty, also fig, sordid, base, mean	
<i>specific: soiled, stained</i>	macchiato stained, spotted	infangato muddy
	insanguinato blood-stained	inquinato polluted
	unto oil-stained, greasy bisunto usu reinforces the above in the expression unto e bisunto	impolverato dusty, covered with dust (usu clothes, persons, things) polveroso dusty, full of dust (usu places, e.g. room)
	imbrattato (R2-3) soiled, esp with liquids (e.g. paint, mud)	
<i>disgusting</i>	schifoso (R1) disgustingly filthy, disgusting, also morally	
<i>morally dirty</i>	sconcio dirty (usu shows, jokes)	indecente indecent (gen)
	spinto dirty (shows, jokes)	osceno very dirty, indecent (shows, jokes, behaviour, proposals); ALSO awful
	scurrile (R3) scurrilous	turpe (R3) morally filthy (gen)

DRY

asciutto dry, not wet (gen, often with a positive connotation); ALSO (of persons) lean, not fat	secco dry (climate, places, also fig, usu with a negative connotation); ALSO (of persons) skinny; (of plants) dead	arido arid, dry (climate, places, also fig, e.g. il cuore)	arso (R2-3) dried up, scorched (places, also fig, e.g. la gola)	riarso (R3) parched (places, and also fig, e.g. la gola)
prosciugato, disseccato (R3) dried up (lakes etc) disidratato (R2-3) dehydrated				

weaker ←————→ *stronger*

TO EXAMINE

<i>general</i>	esaminare			
	studiare to study		controllare to check	
	analizzare to analyse		verificare to verify	
<i>specific</i>	investigare indagare to investigate	ispezionare (R2-3) to inspect	perquisire (R2-3) to search (usu of police)	perlustrare (R3) to reconnoitre
	scrutare (R3) to scrutinize, to scan	valutare (R2-3) vagliare (R3) to evaluate, to weigh up	visitare to examine medically	

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

FACE (*see also* APPEARANCE)

<i>part of body</i>	faccia (R1-2) also meaning expression, aspect	viso volto (R2-3)	muso (animal) muzzle; ALSO (R1) (ugly) face (often in idioms)
<i>appearance, expression</i>	aspetto aspect		espressione expression
	cera the way sb's face looks with reference to health, in set expressions, e.g. hai una brutta cera (R1-2) you don't look well		
	tratti (m pl R2-3), lineamenti (m pl R2-3), fisionomia (R2-3), fattezze (f pl R3) features (of sb's face)		
<i>surface</i>	faccia side, facet	lato side	superficie (f) surface
<i>figurative, idiomatic</i>	perdere la faccia to lose face		faccia tosta cheek (insolence)
	fare una smorfia/boccaccia to pull a face		
	rompere il muso a qu (R1) to smash sb's face		
	fare/mettere il muso (R1) to pull a long face, to sulk		

FAT (of persons)

grasso	
grassottello (R1-2), grassoccio plump bene in carne (R1-2) well-covered ben nutrito (R1-2) well fed paffuto (R2-3) chubby florido (R2-3) healthy, flourishing pingue (R3) fat	ciccione (f -a, also n) (R1) fat pesante heavy grosso big panciuto paunchy, ALSO fig (e.g. pots) corpulento (R2-3) corpulent, bulky obeso (R3) obese

less (or euphemistic) ← → more

FIRE

fuoco fire (ALSO fig, passion etc.), gunfire		incendio large destructive fire	
falò bonfire	rogo stake; ALSO (R2-3) large destructive fire		pira (R3) (funeral) pyre, stake
ardore (R2-3), passione passion		stufa stove, heating appliance	

FORTUNE, LUCK, CHANCE

bad luck	good luck
caso fate; ALSO accident, event, case	
destino fate, destiny	
fato (R2-3) fate	
sorte (f R2-3) fate, destiny	
sfortuna mala/cattiva sorte (R2-3) scalogna (R1) iella (R1, Center, South) sfiga (R1*-1, North)	fortuna buona sorte (R2-3) provvidenza (godsend) culo (R1*)
NOTE the expressions: avere sfortuna/scalogna (R1)/ iella (R1)/ sfiga (R1*-1) to be unlucky	NOTE the expressions: avere fortuna/culo (R1*) to be lucky

FUEL (LIQUID)

liquid fuel (gen)	carburante (m)
combustible	combustibile (m/adj R2-3) (liquid, solid, gaseous)
propellant	propellente (m/adj R3) (liquid, solid)
oil lubricant, cooking	olio
petroleum	petrolio
crude	petrolio greggio, greggio
kerosene	cherosene (m)
diesel oil; fuel oil (for heating)	gasolio, nafta
petrol, gasoline	benzina
unleaded	benzina verde/senza piombo
super/premium	benzina super, super (f R1-2)

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

GATE

cancello garden gate	cancellata imposing gate, with railings
barriera barrier; major motorway entrance/exit	sbarra movable barrier (eg level crossing); ALSO bar (metal/wood)
casello motorway entrance/exit	porta gate of a city (if gen, usu plural)
entrata entrance	uscita exit; boarding gate (airport)

GIFT

present		
general	regalo present, gift	
	pensiero (R1) present, gift; un pensierino (R1) = a little something, a little gift	
	dono (R2-3) gift	presente (m R3) present
specific		
for Christmas	strenna (natalizia/di Natale) (R2-3) Christmas present	
commercial	omaggio gift, often commercial, e.g. in omaggio = as a (free) gift, complimentary; ALSO = tribute	
legal	donazione (R3 leg) legal gift, legal donation	
donation	offerta offering, donation	
	elemosina alms; fare/dare l'elemosina = to give alms	
	òbolo (R3) (small) donation; l'òbolo di San Pietro = Peter's pence	
	elargizione (R3) generous donation; fare elargizioni (R3) = to give generously	
	NOTE the common expressions: chiedere la carità = to beg; fare la carità = to give alms	
natural gift		
talento talent	dono (R2-3) natural gift	dote (f R2-3) endowment; ALSO dowry

TO GIVE

<i>general</i>	dare		
<i>specific</i>			
<i>as a present</i>	donare (R2-3) to donate	regalare to give as a present	elargire (R3) to give generously
<i>to grant</i>	concedere to grant, to allow, to concede		accordare to grant
<i>to offer</i>	offrire to offer		porgere (R3) to offer; ALSO (R2-3) to pass
<i>to provide</i>	provvedere (R2-3) qu di qc fornire qu/qc di qc to provide sb with sth fornire qc a qu to provide sth for sb		dotare qu/qc di qc to endow sb with sth to equip sth with sth
<i>to surrender</i>	cedere to give up, to hand over, to surrender; ALSO (R2-3) to sell, to legally transfer rights, property, shares etc.		
<i>to deliver</i>	consegnare to deliver; ALSO to hand in		recapitare (R2-3) to deliver (esp mail, parcels etc)
<i>to award, to bestow</i>	assegnare to assign, to award		aggiudicare to award, to adjudge
	attribuire to award, to assign; ALSO to attribute, to ascribe		conferire (R3) to confer, to bestow
<i>to entrust</i>	affidare qc a qu to entrust sth to sb; affidare un incarico = to assign a task		
<i>to administer</i>	somministrare (R3) to give medicines, sacraments		
<i>unpleasant things</i>	sbolognare (R1) to palm off (counterfeit notes etc., on sb = a qu); to get rid (of useless things, of annoying persons)		affibbiare (R1) appioppare (R1) to give unpleasant things, e.g. slaps, kicks, fines, nicknames, burdens, responsibilities; to palm off (counterfeit notes etc., on sb = a qc)
	rifilare (R1) to palm off (counterfeit notes etc.); to give (a slap, a kick)		mollare (R1) to deal (slaps, kicks)
<i>burdens</i>	accollare qc a qu to saddle sb with sth (burdens, responsibilities, expenses etc); to lay on sb the responsibility for sth		addossare qc a qu to lay on sb the responsibility/the blame for sth

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

GLASS (*see also* WINDOW)

<i>substance</i>	vetro glass (gen)	crystallo crystal; ALSO pane of glass, plate glass
<i>for drinking</i>	bicchiere glass	calice (m R3) goblet; chalice
	boccale (m R2-3) tankard, jug	coppa (R3) goblet, drinking cup; ALSO (R2) cup (= prize)
	NOTE: all these vessels can be made of different materials, e.g. bicchiere di carta/plastica = paper/plastic cup	
<i>for looking through</i>	occhiali (m pl) glasses, spectacles	binocolo binoculars, field glasses
	lente (f) (d'ingrandimento) (magnifying) lens/magnifying glass	
<i>for other uses</i>	clessidra hour glass, sand glass	

TO GROW, TO INCREASE (intr)

- All the following intransitive verbs take **essere** as auxiliary

<i>general</i>	crescere to grow, to increase in size (natural process)		
<i>more abstract</i>	aumentare to increase (quantity, weight, extension, price, temperature)	accrescersi (R3) to grow, to increase (quantity)	moltiplicarsi to multiply, to increase (quantity)
<i>specific</i>			
<i>to expand, to extend</i>	espandersi (R2-3) to expand	estendersi (R2-3) to extend	ampliarsi (R2-3) to grow larger, to extend
<i>to get bigger</i>	ingrandirsi (less common ingrandire) to grow larger in dimensions, also fig to expand commercially etc.		ingrossare/ingrossarsi to grow larger (volume, mass); to swell, to get fat
<i>to get fatter</i>	ingrassare/ingrassarsi		
<i>to get dilated, swollen</i>	gonfiarsi to swell (also of rivers etc.)		dilatarsi (R2-3) to dilate; to expand (physics)
<i>to get longer</i>	allungarsi to lengthen (space or time), to grow taller; ALSO to lie down		prolungarsi (R2-3) to extend (space), to get longer (time); ALSO to dwell at length on sth
<i>to get wider</i>	allargarsi to get wider, to widen, to spread		
<i>to get taller, higher</i>	alzarsi to grow taller; to rise; ALSO to get up		
<i>to grow up</i>	diventare grande (R1-2) to grow up, to become an adult		venire su (R1) to grow (persons, plants)
<i>to develop</i>	svilupparsi to develop		evolversi (R2-3) to evolve

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

GUN

<i>general</i>	arma (pl armi) weapon	arma da fuoco (R2-3) fire-arm	
<i>specific</i>			
<i>hand gun</i>	rivoltella revolver (m R2-3) revolver	pistola pistol	
<i>machine-gun</i>	mitra (m)	mitragliatrice (heavy) machine-gun	
	fucile (m) mitragliatore (R3) sub-machine-gun		
<i>shotgun, rifle</i>	fucile (m) gun, shotgun, rifle	carabina (R2-3) rifle, carbine	doppietta double barrellled gun
	schioppo (R1-2) rifle, shotgun	lupara sawn-off shotgun	moschetto (R2-3) musket
	trombone (m R3) sawn-off shotgun	archibugio (R3) (h)arquebus	spingarda (R3) springald
<i>cannon</i>	cannone (m) cannon, large gun	mortaio mortar	pezzo d'artiglieria (R2-3) piece of ordnance

HAIR

<i>human</i>		<i>animal</i>	
<i>individual</i>	<i>collective</i>	<i>individual</i>	<i>collective</i>
capello (one) hair (on head)	capelli (pl) hair (on head) capigliatura (R2-3), chioma (R2-3) head of hair zazzera long hair (on head)	pelo hair (gen) sétola bristle crine (m) horsehair bafo whisker	pelo coat pelliccia fur, coat peluria (R2-3) fine hair cover, down mantello (R2-3) coat vello (R3) fleece criniera mane; ALSO (fig) = thick head of hair
pelo (one) hair (gen, face and body)	peluria (R2-3) fine hair cover, down		
ciglio eyelash	ciglia (f pl) eyelashes		
	sopracciglio eyebrow sopracciglia (f pl) eyebrows		
	baffi (m pl) moustache; ALSO bafo (R1-2) half or whole moustache		
	barba beard pizzo goatee		
	basette (f pl) sideburns favoriti (m pl) muttonchops		

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

HANDLE

maniglia handle (door, drawer etc.)		mànico handle, shaft (often long in shape), for cutlery (e.g. knife), tools (e.g. hammer), handbag, umbrella, broom, shovel etc.	
impugnatura (R2-3) grip (racquets, whips, pistols, swords etc.)		manovella crank, starting handle	
manubrio handlebar (bicycle etc.)		pomo, pomello (R2-3) knob (doors, drawers, walking sticks etc.)	
calcio (R2-3) butt (rifle, pistol)	ansa (R3) handle (vase, jug etc.)	elsa (R3) hilt	

HEEL

tallone (m) heel (usu foot, but also sock)	calcagno (R2-3) heel (usu foot, but also sock, shoe, less common than tallone)	tacco heel (shoe)
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TO HELP

<i>general</i>	aiutare
	dare una mano a qc (R1-2) to give sb a hand
	assistere to assist, to attend (usu persons with health or social problems); to help in a professional way (nurses, lawyers etc.)
	soccorrere (R2-3), prestare soccorso a qc (R2-3) to help sb in dangerous or difficult situations
	coadiuvare (R3) to assist, to help
<i>specific</i>	
<i>to support</i>	sostenere to support (gen)
	sorreggere (R2-3) to support physically or morally
	appoggiare to support, to back up
<i>to co-operate</i>	collaborare (con qu a qc) (R2-3) to collaborate (with sb in sth)
	cooperare (con qu a qc) (R2-3) to co-operate (with sb in sth)
<i>to facilitate</i>	facilitare, agevolare (R2-3)

HILL

<i>whole, general</i>			
altura (R3) rise, height, hill, mountain			
poggio (R3) hillock	collina hill colle (m R2-3) hill (often in names; strictly speaking, less than 600 meters high)	montagna mountain monte (m) mountain (often in names; strictly speaking, more than 600 meters high)	
<i>whole, specific</i>			
picco (R2-3) peak	massiccio (R3) massif	duna (sand) dune	dosso (R3) small hill on roads
<i>slope</i>			
discesa downhill slope		salita uphill slope	
china (R2-3), pendìo (R2-3), declivio (R3) slope, declivity	pendice (f R2-3) slope, side of hill/mountain costa (R2-3) side of hill/mountain	pendenza (R2-3) gradient, slant (abstr.)	erta (R3) steep uphill slope scarpata steep slope (usu short)

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

TO GET HOLD OF (*see also* TO TAKE)

<i>general</i>	prendere	pigliare (R1-2 Center, South)
<i>specific</i>		
<i>to catch</i>	accalappare (R3) to catch (usu stray dogs; fig, persons)	
	acchiappare (R1) to catch (usu persons, animals)	
	acciuflare (R1-2) to catch (usu persons)	
	afferrare to catch and hold tightly	
	agguantare (R1) to catch	
	catturare to capture, to take prisoner	
<i>to grab</i>	aggrapparsi a qc/qu to grab and hold onto sth/sb	
	cogliere to pick, to pluck; fig to seize (e.g. opportunity)	
	ghermire (R3) to clutch (of birds of prey etc.)	
	impugnare (R2-3) to grab, to grip with one's hand (weapons, racquets, tools etc.)	
<i>to take possession</i>	impossessarsi di qc/qu (R2-3) to appropriate, to seize	
	impadronirsi di qc/qu (R2-3) to appropriate, to seize; fig to master (e.g. languages)	

HOLE

<i>general</i>				
buco hole (gen)			buca hole (usu in the ground), one side opening	
foro (R2-3) hole (usu round)			pertugio (R3) small, narrow hole	
<i>specific</i>				
<i>crack</i>	crepa crack	crepaccio large crack in ground, rock or glacier (crevasse)	fessura (R2-3) crack, narrow opening	fenditura (R3) cleft, crack
<i>hollow</i>	vuoto hollow, gap		cavità (R2-3) cavity, hollow	
<i>pit</i>	fossa hole dug in the ground, pit; tomb		scavo (R2-3) excavation	
<i>(others)</i>	apertura (R2-3) opening	orifizio (R3) orifice		breccia (R3) breach, gap in a fortified wall

HOLIDAYS

<i>festivity</i>	<i>day off work</i>
festà holiday, usu festivity but also day off work; in the plural it often refers to the Christmas holidays e.g. buone feste = season's greetings	
giorno festivo (R2-3) holiday, usu opposed to giorno feriale = week day, working day	
festività (R2-3) festivity, feast day ricorrenza (R2-3) recurring feast day solennità (R2-3) (solemn) feast day (usu religious)	vacanza holiday (from school, work); in vacanza = on holiday
	permesso leave; in permesso = on leave
	ferie (f pl) holidays (from work); in ferie = on holiday (from work)
	congedo leave, usu from military service (also = discharge), but also from work; usu in the expression in congedo = on leave (also = retired, discharged)
	licenza leave (usu military); often in the expression in licenza = on leave
	ponte (m) day(s) off work bridging two holidays; also used to indicate the resulting extended holiday
	anno sabbatico (R2-3) sabbatical

TO HURRY

<i>to hurry (to do sth)</i>	
sbrigarsi (a + inf) (R1-2)	spicciarsi (a + inf) (R1)
fare presto (a + inf) to be quick (at doing sth)	correre (a + inf) to run (to do sth)
affrettarsi (a + inf) (R2-3) to hurry	precipitarsi (a + inf) (R2-3) to rush
<i>to be in a hurry</i>	
avere fretta	andare di fretta/corsa

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

TO INFORM

<i>general</i>		
R1	R2	R3
far sapere (qc a qu)		
	informare (qu di/su qc)	
	mettere al corrente (qu di qc) rendere noto (qc a qu)	
		ragguagliare (qu su qc)
<i>specific</i>		
notificare (qc a qu) (R3) to notify	avvertire (qu di qc) avvisare (qu di qc) to notify; to warn	
ammonire (R3) to warn	prevenire (R3) to forewarn	
comunicare (qc a qu) (R2-3) to communicate	partecipare (qc a qu) (R3) to communicate; to announce	annunciare (qc a qu) to announce

TO KNOW

sapere to have knowledge of sth; to know how to do something	conoscere to be acquainted/familiar with sth/sb; to meet sb for the first time	intendersi di qc to be competent about sth, to be an expert on sth
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LANGUAGE

lingua		
linguaggio type of language, language faculty	idioma (m R3) language, idiom	
dialetto dialect	vernacolo (R3) vernacular, dialect	
favella (R3) (power of) speech, talking	gergo jargon, slang	
parlare (m R2-3) way of speaking, dialect	parlata way of speaking, dialect, accent	parola (gift of) speech

TO LEAVE

<i>transitive</i>	
lasciare	abbandonare to abandon
<i>intransitive (see also TO MOVE)</i> NOTE: AUX essere unless otherwise stated; place of departure usu introduced by da	
partire (per + destination) to leave	andarsene, andar via to go away
allontanarsi to go off, to wander from	uscire to go out
decollare (R2-3) (AUX avere) to take off	salpare (per + destination) (R3) to weigh anchor, to set sail

LEG

gamba leg (human, furniture)	arto inferiore (R3) lower limb arto posteriore (R3) hind limb	zampa leg (animal), paw
coscia thigh; ALSO leg of butchered/cooked animals, e.g. coscia di pollo = chicken leg, drumstick	coscio leg of larger animals, when butchered or cooked, e.g. coscio di agnello = leg of lamb	

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

MONEY

<i>general</i>	soldi (m pl)		denaro (danaro) (more abstract and less common than soldi)
	quattrini (m pl R1-2) ALSO = dough		
<i>specific</i>			
<i>cash</i>	contante (m) usu pl, as in the expression in contanti = cash (as a way of payment)		(denaro) liquido (R2-3)
<i>change</i>	resto (balance of a transaction)		
<i>coin</i>	moneta ALSO = currency; money (abstr.); (R1 North) small change		spiccioli (m pl) loose change
<i>currency</i>	valuta (R2-3)		divisa (R3)
<i>dough etc</i>	grana (R1)	pecunia (R1)	conquibus (m R1)
	dindi (m pl R1, baby talk) money		baiocchi (m pl R1) (ALSO (lit R3) = baiocs, old papal currency)
	schei (m pl R1, Veneto) money		palanche (f pl R1, North) money
<i>fortune</i>	fortuna		capitale (m R1-2) (usu [R2] = capital)
	patrimonio (R1-2) e.g. costare/spendere un patrimonio = to cost/to spend a fortune; ALSO (R1-2-3) = estate		
<i>funds</i>	fondi (m pl)		
<i>nest-egg</i>	risparmi (m pl) savings	gruzzolo (R1-2) savings	peculio (R1) (ALSO [R3] = peculium)
NOTE: un soldo, una lira, un quattrino (R1-2), il becco di un quattrino (R1) are used in negative sentences, meaning (not) a penny/a twopence/a bean/a cent			

MOUTHFUL

boccone (m) mouthful, bite (of food), morsel	boccata mouthful, usu of air (= breath) or smoke (= puff)
morso bite (gen)	tirata (R1) puff (cigarette smoke)
sorso sip	sorsata sip, gulp

TO MOVE (intr)

<i>to shift</i>	muoversi (absolute or with direction) to move (gen, with or without changing place)	spostarsi (absolute or with direction or with destination) to move (usu from one place to another)
<i>to move house</i>	traslocare (AUX avere), traslocarsi (absolute or with destination)	trasferirsi (absolute or with destination)
<i>to go away</i>	andarsene	sloggiare (AUX avere) to move out

NAME

<i>name, surname</i>	nome (m) name (also fig); full name; given name; ALSO noun		
	cognome (m) surname, family name		
	nome di battesimo (R2-3) first name, Christian name		
	nominativo (R3) name (bureaucratic, usu in lists etc)		
	NOTE: in Italy, the practice of putting surname before name often finds its way outside the realm of bureaucracy		
<i>nickname</i>	soprannome (m)	nomignolo	appellativo (R3)
<i>pseudonym</i>	pseudònimò (R2-3) pseudonym (gen)	nome d'arte (R3) pseudonym (esp of actors); pen-name	nome di battaglia (R3) pseudonym, nom de guerre
<i>insult</i>	insulto, ingiuria (R2-3), insultare qc, coprire qc di insulti (R2-3) = to call sb names		

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

NATIVE

noun (person only)				
indigeno person born and found living in a specified place, usu outside Europe				
aborigeno (R3) original inhabitant, esp, but not only, of Australia		oriundo (R2-3) person of specified birth/ancestry (usu indicated by adj, e.g. oriundo italiano)		nativo (R3) person born in a specified place (more common as an adj)
adjective				
belonging to a place by birth	of persons	nativo di (R2-3) native of, originally from	originario di native of, originally from	indigeno (R2-3), autòctono (R3) original to a given place, local
	of culture, flora, fauna etc.			
local	of persons, flora, fauna, culture etc.	locale, del luogo		
relating to sb's birth	of places e.g. città, paese, terra etc.	natale, nativo, natìo (R3); NOTE: (madre) patria = native country, fatherland		
	of language	materno e.g. lingua materna NOTE: madrelingua = mother tongue; di madrelingua = native (speakers)		

NOISE

rumore gen, usu inanimate or unknown sources; ALSO = sound (when not perceived as musical or referring to human voice)	verso “voice”-generated noise, esp of animals
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NOISES OF ANIMALS

- All the verbs in **-ire** in the following table are “**isc**” verbs.
- The first term in the animals column is the most common form for the particular breed; the respective feminine or masculine form has been given in brackets, if irregular (see also section 14.1.2).
- In the list of animal noises, the infinitive of the verb is often used as a noun, e.g. **il ragliare degli asini**.
- The Italian verb for “to go” as in “the rooster goes cockadoodledoo” is **fare**, e.g. **il gallo fa chicchirichì**.

<i>animal</i>		<i>verb</i>	<i>noun</i>	<i>noise (all R1)</i>
bird	uccello	cinguettare cantare trillare (R3)	cinguettio canto trillo (R2-3)	cip / cip-cip - -
cat	gatto	miagolare	miagolio	miao
chick; little bird	pulcino ; uccellino	pigolare	pigolio	pio-pio
cow (bull)	mucca, vacca (R1-2) (toro)	muggire	muggito	muu
crow	corvo ; cornacchia	gracchiare	gracchio (R2-3)	cra cra
deer	cervo	bramire (R3)	bramito (R3)	-
dog (bitch)	cane (cagna)	abbaiare latrare guaire	- latrato guaìto	bau / bau-bau - caì / caì-caì
donkey	asino	ragliare	raglio	hi ho; i-o
elephant	elefante (m)	barrire	barrito	-
frog	rana	gracidare	gracidio	-
goose; duck	oca; anatra	-	-	qua qua
hen	gallina , chioccia	- chiocciare (R2-3)	- -	coccodè -
horse	cavallo	nitrire	nitrito	-
lion, tiger, leopard etc.	leone (m), tigre (f), leopardo etc.	ruggire	ruggito	-
mouse	topo	squittire	squittio	squit/squit- squit
pig (sow)	maiale (m), porco (R1*-1) (scrofa)	grugnire	grugnito	-
rooster	gallo	cantare	canto	chicchirichì
sheep/ewe (ram) goat	pecora (montone) capra	belare	belato	bèe
swallow	róndine (f)	garrire (R3)	garrito (R3)	-
turkey	tacchino	-	-	glu-glu
wolf	lupo	ululare	ululato	-

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

OTHER NOISES/SOUNDS

- Words based on English onomatopoeic verbs – e.g. sniff, bang, gulp, sob, pronounced the Italian way – have become known in Italy through comic books. However, they are not normally used in the spoken language. This table lists a number of more common Italian onomatopoeic terms.

source	verb	noise-producing action (noun)	noise (all R1)
child crying	piangere	pianto	uè uè/uà uà
sb drinking	bere	bevuta	glu glu
sb smacking sb	dare uno schiaffo	schiaffo	paf/pàffete
sb sneezing	starnutire	starnuto	eccì
sb/sth falling	cadere	caduta capitòmbolo (R1-2)	patapùm/ patapùnfete
sb/sth falling and/or hitting sth/sb	cadere sbattere urtare	caduta - urto botta	pam/pàmfete
sb/sth knocking on a door	bussare	-	toc toc
sth breaking	rompersi spaccarsi	rottura - (spacco = crack, not cracking)	crac
sth falling and/or breaking, also fig	cadere rompersi	caduta rottura	patatrac
bomba bomb	esplodere	esplosione botto	bum
campana (large) bell (church etc.)	scampanare suonare/sonare rintoccare	scampanio (R2-3) suono rintocco	din don din don din/don
campanello (small) bell (bicycle, door etc.)	scampanellare suonare/sonare trillare (R3)	scampanellio suono trillo (R2-3)	drin/drindrin dring/dring-dring
arma da fuoco fire-arm	sparare	sparo	pim/pam
orologio clock, watch	ticchettare	ticchettio	tic-tac
telefono telephone	suonare/sonare trillare (R3)	suono trillo (R2-3)	drin, dring

OLD

<i>persons</i>	<i>things</i>
vecchio old (also of animals); former	
anziano elderly, aged; senior	antico ancient
avanti negli anni di età avanzata di una certa età (all somewhat euphemistic) old, well on in years	annoso (R3) old; age-old (esp of questions, arguments etc)
	senile (R3) old (esp of age, e.g. età senile)
	vetusto (R3) very old, ancient
maturo mature	secolare (R2-3) very old (of trees etc); age-old; (lit) century old/centuries old
attempato (R2-3) elderly	
bacucco (R1) (derogatory, often after vecchio) dotard	usato used, second hand (of clothes etc)
	di seconda mano second hand
	stagionato (R2-3) matured (of food); seasoned (of wood); ALSO (R1) elderly (of persons)
	obsoleto (R3) obsolete
invecchiato aged decrèpito (R2-3) (often after vecchio) decrepit, very old	

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

OUTSKIRTS, SURROUNDINGS

<i>general</i>	dintorni (m pl) surroundings nei dintorni (di) = in the vicinity (of)	paraggi (m pl R2-3) neighbourhood, environs; nei paraggi (di) (R2) = not far (from)
	vicinanze (f pl R2-3) environs; nelle vicinanze (di) (R2) = in the vicinity (of)	adiacenze (f pl R3) surroundings nelle adiacenze (di) = in the vicinity (of)
	zona limitrofa (R3) (often in the pl), area circostante (R3) surrounding area	
<i>of a city</i>	periferia outskirts, suburbs (as opposed to the city center)	sobborgo (R2-3) suburb
	porte (f pl) (city) gates e.g. alle porte di Roma = at the gates of Rome, just outside Rome	borgata suburb in the outskirts of Rome; ALSO village
	cintura (R3) belt (esp cintura industriale = industrial belt)	hinterland ['interland] (m R3) geographic area of influence of a big city e.g. l'hinterland milanese

PAIR, COUPLE

<i>pair</i>	<i>couple</i>
paio of objects made of two similar and complementary parts, e.g. un paio di forbici/calzoni/mutande/occhiali/ etc. of sets made of two similar and strictly complementary objects e.g. un paio di scarpe/calze/guanti/ etc.	un paio (di) (usu not with nouns forming a pair) a couple (of), about two, e.g. un paio d'ore = a couple of hours
compagno (f -a) member of a set of two objects	
coppia of two elements of the same kind (usu, but not only, persons or animals) in some way related and considered as a set, e.g. una coppia di gemelli (pair of twins)/ innamorati (lovers)/ canarini (canaries, i.e. male and female)/ assi (aces (etc.), in card games)/etc. fare coppia con qu = to pair off with sb a coppie = in pairs	coppia (married) couple, e.g. una bella coppia = a handsome couple
NOTE the difference in the following pair of examples (coppia di esempi):	
una coppia di avvocati = a pair of lawyers (i.e. a team of two lawyers)	un paio di avvocati = a couple of lawyers (i.e. two (or three) lawyers, not necessarily connected)

PATH

<i>concrete</i>			
cammino path, way; ALSO journey	mulattiera (R2-3) mule-track	pista (R2-3) track; ALSO (R2) trail, ski slope, racing track; (R2-3) runway	sentiero path, track, usu on mountains, in woods, fields etc.
stradina stradicciola (smaller) lane, path	via path (also fig), track (in fields etc.); route; ALSO (usu) street; way	viale (m) violetto (smaller) path in gardens, parks etc.	viottolo narrow path, usu through fields
<i>abstract</i>			
corso route	percorso route, run; lungo il percorso = en route	tragitto (R2-3) route, journey	traiettoria (R2-3) trajectory (physics, e.g. of bullets etc.)

PAY

pay (gen)	stipendio							
	salario pay, esp settimanale/mensile (monthly/weekly), usu for manual workers		paga pay oraria/giornaliera/settimanale/ etc (hourly/daily/weekly/etc)					
daily pay	giornata day's pay		diaria (R2-3) day's pay; (R3) daily allowance for travelling expenses, per diem					
monthly pay	mensile (m) monthly pay		mensilità (R2-3) monthly instalment (of salary)					
	tredicesima extra monthly pay given as part of annual salary		quattordicesima further monthly pay given beside the tredicesima as part of annual salary					
bonus	gratifica (R3)							
allowance	indennità (R3) ALSO indemnity							
for specific services	onorario (R2-3) doctor's fee		parcella (R2-3) usu lawyer's fee		competenze (f pl R3) fee for professional services			
remuneration	corresponsione rimunerazione (remunerazione) (all R3)		compenso (R2-3) ALSO (usu) (R2) reward		retribuzione (R3) ALSO reward		mercede (f R3 literary) ALSO reward	

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

POLICEMAN

general		
policeman (for general police purposes)	agente (m) (di polizia/di pubblica sicurezza (R2-3))	
	poliziotto (R1-2) NOTE: la polizia = the police	celerino (R1) NOTE: la Celere = the Flying Squad
	questurino (R1)	guardia (R1-2) ALSO guard, cop, e.g. guardie e ladri = cops and robbers
	gendarme (m R1-2 old fashioned) ALSO cop	carabiniere member of the Carabinieri, an army corps with police duties (including traffic)
specific		
traffic police	vigile (urbano, -a), pizzardone (m R1 Rome), ghisa (m R1 Milan) traffic policeman (in cities) agente (m) (della polizia stradale), milite (m R1) traffic policeman (usu on roads outside cities); ALSO (R3) soldier NOTE: collectively, la polizia/milizia stradale; la milizia (R1); la stradale (R1))	
financial police	finanziere customs or revenue officer NOTE: collectively, la Guardia di Finanza/la Finanza (R1-2)/(less common) le Fiamme gialle	
nightwatchman	metronotte (m), guardia notturna	
derogatory		
flatfoot	piedipiatti (m R1-2)	
cop	sbirro (R1), sgherro (R1) (both not very common)	

POSTER, NOTICE, SIGN

<i>notice (abstract)</i>	avviso notice (esp written, also official, legal etc); advertisement in newspapers	annuncio notice; announcement (esp spoken); advertisement in newspapers
	inserzione (R2-3) insertion, advertisement in newspaper	bando (R3) public announcement (usu calling for tenders or applications to compete for a job)
<i>(concrete)</i>	cartello notice (referring to the object as well as the content), placard, sign	
<i>road sign</i>	cartello (stradale) (for traffic rules, directions)	
	segnale (m) (stradale) (for traffic rules, directions)	
	indicazione (stradale) (R2-3) (for directions only)	
<i>shop sign</i>	insegna , e.g. insegna al neon/luminosa = neon sign; ALSO (R3) emblem; ensign	
<i>poster</i>	manifesto poster (gen), bill; ALSO (R3) manifesto	
	cartellone (pubblicitario) poster (often on a free-standing billboard)	
	locandina (R2-3) small poster, usu advertising films, plays etc.	
	affisso (R3) bill, poster	
	réclame [re'klam](f) advertisement in media, esp television and radio, but also poster	
	poster (m) poster used for decoration, usu at home	
<i>placard, board</i>	cartello placard (in demonstrations etc.)	
	tabellone (m) (notice) board, billboard	
<i>banner</i>	striscione (m) banner (at the stadium, in demonstrations etc.)	
	stendardo (R3) banner of a knight, army corps etc.	gonfalone (m R3) banner of a city, town etc.
<i>writing</i>	scritta writing on wall, pavement, placard, plaque, tablet etc.	
	iscrizione (R2-3) inscription (usu on stone or metal)	
	epigrafe (f R3) epigraph	epitaffio (R3) epitaph
<i>plaque, slab</i>	targa (R2-3) (usu metal) plaque, plate; ALSO usu (R2) car number plate	
	placca (R3) (metal) plaque, plate (in general)	
	lápide (f R2-3) (stone) (memorial) stone/tablet/slab; tombstone	

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

PROUD

<i>positive</i>	fiero (positive connotation) essere fiero di = to be proud of	
	orgoglioso (either positive or negative connotation) essere orgoglioso di = to be proud of	
<i>negative</i>	superbo haughty, proud; superbia = pride, as one of the deadly sins; ALSO (not of persons) superb	
	altero (R3) haughty, disdainful	altezzoso (R3) haughty
<i>haughty, disdainful</i>	sdegnoso (R2-3) disdainful	sprezzante (R2-3) disdainful, scornful
	montato (R1-2) swollen-headed	pieno di sé (R1-2) full of oneself
<i>conceited</i>	presuntuoso presumptuous	pretenzioso (R3) pretentious
	spocchioso conceited	tronfio (R2-3) puffed up
<i>boastful</i>	vanaglorioso (R3) vainglorious	
<i>vain</i>	vanitoso vain	fatuo (R3) fatuous
<i>arrogant</i>	arrogante arrogant	borioso (R2-3) arrogant
	burbanzoso (R3) arrogant	protervo (R3) arrogant, insolent
	tracotante (R3) arrogant	

TO REPAIR

<i>general</i>			
<i>usu concrete</i>	accomodare, aggiustare to repair, to fix (also fig)		
	rabberciare, racconciare, raffazzonare to fix in a botchy way		
	NOTE the following colloquial (R1) expressions: dare un’accomodata/un’aggiustata/una rabberciata/racconciata/raffazzonata/rappezzata/rimediata/riparata/sistemata (a qc) to fix (sth) quickly and in a botchy way		
<i>concrete or abstract</i>	riparare (qc) to repair (gen); to make amends for (injustice etc.); (a qc) (R2-3) to put right, to remedy		
	rimediare (a qc) to put right, to find a remedy (for sth); ALSO (R1) to fix the best one can (qc = sth)		
<i>usu abstract</i>	correggere to correct	rettificare to rectify	sistemare to settle; ALSO to fix (fig)
<i>specific</i>			
<i>to restore</i>	restaurare to restore (esp works of art, buildings etc.); to re-establish (monarchy etc)	ripristinare (R2-3) to restore (buildings etc); to re-establish (public order, services etc.)	ristrutturare to renovate (buildings)
<i>to repair clothes</i>	rammendare to mend, to darn	rappezzare to patch (up), also (R1) fig = to fix in a botchy way	rattoppare to patch (up)

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

ROCK, STONE

<i>general</i>			
roccia rock, usu large and ‘in situ’, on mountains, in the ground etc; also in science			
pietra stone (small piece of rock; material); fig cuore di pietra = heart of stone pietra angolare (R2-3) cornerstone pietra filosofale (R3) philosopher’s stone pietra focaia (R2-3) flintstone pietra miliare (R2-3) milestone pietra di paragone (R3) touchstone pietra preziosa precious stone, gem pietra tombale/sepolcrale (R2-3) tombstone			
sasso stone (small piece of rock), pebble; fig rimanere/restare di sasso = to be dumbfounded			
<i>specific</i>			
<i>large</i>	masso, macigno boulder; e.g. caduta massi = falling rocks (warning sign)		
<i>small</i>	ciottolo, sassolino pebble		
<i>loose</i>	breccia road metal; gravel	ghiaia (fine) gravel (esp on garden paths)	pietrisco road metal, crushed stone (esp for mixing in concrete)
<i>other</i> <i>rock in the sea</i>	scoglio rock in the sea, cliff, crag		
<i>Rock of Gibraltar</i>	rocca di Gibilterra		
<i>paving stone</i>	selce (f) flint; cobblestone (roads etc.)		
	sampietrino (R1-2) paving stone (roads etc. in Rome)		
<i>kidney stone</i>	calcolo		
<i>memorial stone</i>	lapide (f) tablet; tombstone		
<i>gem</i>	gemma		

TO SAY, TO TELL, TO SPEAK, TO TALK

<i>to say, to tell</i> <i>The Italian verbs in this column are usu tr or followed by a declarative clause</i>		<i>to speak, to talk</i> <i>The Italian verbs in this column are intr (AUX avere), unless differently specified</i>	
<i>to say, to tell (gen)</i>	dire	<i>to speak, to talk</i>	parlare (ALSO = to give a speech/ talk); tr with languages, e.g. parlare il francese
<i>to tell (stories, past events)</i>	raccontare to tell, to narrate	<i>to express oneself</i>	esprimersi (R2-3)
	narrare (R2-3) to narrate, to tell (esp stories)		pronunciarsi (R2-3) to express one's opinion
<i>to tell (to blab)</i>	spiattellare (R1) to blab	<i>to converse, to discuss</i>	conversare (R2-3) to talk, to converse
	spifferare (R1) to blab, to spill the beans		discorrere (R2-3) to talk, to converse
<i>to state, to maintain</i>	dichiarare to declare		dialogare (R2-3) to converse, to hold a dialogue
	sostenere to maintain		
	affermare (R2-3) to state		
	asserire (R3) to assert		
<i>to report</i>	riferire to report, to tell	discutere (also tr) to discuss, to debate	
<i>to announce</i>	annunciare	<i>to chat</i>	chiacchierare
<i>to proclaim</i>	proclamare (R2-3)		confabulare (R2-3) to talk/to chat in secret (usu ironic)
<i>to admit, to confess</i>	ammettere to admit	<i>to talk idly, to gossip</i>	cianciare (R1), cicalare (R1) to talk idly, to chatter
	confessare to confess		ciarlare (R1) to chat idly, to gossip
<i>to utter</i>	pronunciare to utter, to pronounce		spettegolare (R1) to gossip
	proferire (R3) to utter, to pronounce (solemnly)		
	articolare (R3) to utter, to articulate		
<i>to recite</i>	recitare to recite; ALSO (intr) to act		<i>to talk nonsense</i>
	declamare (R3) to declaim	farneticare (R2-3) to talk nonsense; ALSO (lit) to be delirious	
<i>to explain</i>	spiegare to explain	straparlare (R1) to rave, to talk wildly	
	esporre (R2-3) to expound, to explain		
NOTE the following R2-3 expressions:			
to give a talk = tenere una conferenza			
to give a speech = fare (R2)/ pronunciare (R2-3) un discorso			
to start to speak, to take the floor = prendere la parola			

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

SEAT

<i>abstract</i>	
<i>place where one can sit</i>	posto place (gen), seat (theater, cinema, train, plane, school etc.); ALSO posto a sedere as opposed to posto in piedi
<i>place where sth is located</i>	sede (f) seat, headquarters, main office; also fig la sede dell'intelletto the seat of intellect centro center, seat
<i>electoral district</i>	seggio seat; polling station (seggio (elettorale)); ALSO (R3, concrete, also fig) chair/throne of person in authority
<i>concrete = object on which one can sit</i>	
<i>general</i>	sedile (m) any object used to sit on; bench, seat, esp in means of transportation (car seat etc); part of a chair where one sits
<i>specific seats</i>	
<i>bench</i>	panca long seat, bench (gen, but not fig in sport) panchina bench, usu outdoors, e.g. park, station etc; also fig in sport banco bench, usu indoors and for specific purposes: pew, desk (for students in classrooms), dock (banco degli imputati), jury-box (banco della giuria), members' seats in parliament (banchi dei deputati); ALSO long table, counter; bank.
<i>chair</i>	sedia, sèggiola (Tuscan, less common)
<i>armchair</i>	poltrona ; ALSO stall (theater); comfortable seat in gen (cinema etc)
<i>deck-chair</i>	sedia a sdraio, sdraio (f R1-2)
<i>highchair</i>	seggiolone (m)
<i>small chair</i>	seggiolino small chair/seat (esp for children); pilot seat (seggiolino eiettabile = ejector seat)
<i>important seats</i>	trono throne
	seggio (R3) seat/throne of person in authority
	scanno (R3) stall, seat in solemn places, e.g. parliament, church (choir)
	scranno/scranna (R3) high-backed chair (e.g. of judges)
<i>other seats</i>	strapuntino folding seat (car, train, cinema)
	gradinata (usu pl gradinate) tier(s) of seats in a stadium
	sella saddle and other seats one sits astride on, e.g. motorbicycle, bicycle (also sellino = bicycle seat)
<i>stool</i>	sgabello, panchetto (less specific)
NOTE : “seat” in garments = fondo (lit = bottom)	

SERVANT

Some of the Italian terms may sound offensive if used out of an appropriate context.

lower ↑ perceived social standing ↓ higher	schiaivo/-a slave (also fig)		
	sguattero/-a (R2-3) scullery boy/maid, dishwasher (also derogatory)		
	servo/-a servant (also fig and derogatory); NOTE servitù = servants, household staff, BUT ALSO (R2-3) servitude, slavery		
	servitore servant (servitrice is less common)		
	domestico/-a (R2-3) (household) servant	donna/uomo (less common) delle pulizie cleaning lady/cleaner	donna/persona di servizio maid/servant; personale (m) (di servizio) = staff NOTE: uomo di servizio is not used
	cameriere/-a (house) (household) servant/ (house)maid		
	cameriere/-a (hotel) manservant/ (chamber)maid (restaurant) waiter/waitress	colf (f, short for collaboratrice familiare) (household) helper, housemaid	inserviente (m/f R2-3) attendant (gen in hospitals, hotels etc)
	governante (f R2-3) housekeeper; nanny		
maggiordomo butler			

NOTE: there is no exact equivalent of “civil servant” in Italian:
funzionario statale/dello stato State official (generic);
impiegato statale State employee (generic, usu not at a high level);
buròcrate (m) bureaucrat (often with negative “red tape” overtones)

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

SHOE, BOOT

<i>general</i>	
calzatura (R2-3, term used in official communications in preference to scarpa) footwear, shoe	
<i>specific</i>	
<i>shoe (gen)</i>	scarpa
<i>moccasin</i>	mocassino (usu slip-on shoe, without laces)
<i>sport shoe</i>	scarpa da tennis tennis shoe; ALSO (in gen) training shoe, trainer
	scarpa da ginnastica training shoe, trainer (for specific sports, scarpa da + sport)
<i>open shoe</i>	infradito (m/f) flip-flop (UK), thong (Aus)
	sàndalo sandal
	zòccolo clog
<i>boot (high)</i>	stivale (m) knee-high boot, usu leather (horse riding etc.) or rubber (Wellington boot (UK), gumboot (Aus)); lo Stivale = the Italian peninsula, Italy
<i>low boot</i>	stivaletto ankle-high boot (in a variety of materials)
<i>heavy boot</i>	scarpone (m) heavy ankle-high boot, esp for skiing
<i>light boot for sport</i>	scarpa da ..., e.g. scarpa da calcio = football boot
<i>slipper</i>	pantòfola
	ciabatta slipper or worn-out shoe used at home; (fig) old and worn-out thing
	pianella flat slipper
	babbuccia slipper (not common); knitted footwear (usu in wool) for newborn baby; (R3) babouche
<i>galosh</i>	caloscia (galoscia), soprascarpa
NOTE: horse-shoe = ferro di cavallo	

TO SHOOT (see also GUN)

<i>with a weapon</i>	
<i>to fire a weapon (at sb/sth)</i>	sparare (a qu/qc) (also fig) fare fuoco (R2-3) (contro qu/qc)
<i>to shoot sb</i>	ferire/uccidere (a colpi di pistola/fucile/arma da fuoco [R2-3] etc.) to wound/kill (with a handgun/rifle/fire-weapon etc.) fucilare, passare per le armi (R2-3) to execute by shooting
<i>to shoot oneself</i>	spararsi
<i>to shoot down (sb/sth)</i>	abbattere (qu/qc) to shoot down (esp planes), to kill
<i>to shoot (sport)</i>	tirare (a qc) ; shooting range = poligono di tiro NOTE: sparo usu refers to the noise of the shot; tiro usu refers to its length, accuracy etc.
<i>to hunt</i>	andare a caccia (di qc) (ALSO [fig.] = to look for sb/sth); cacciare (R2-3, less common)
<i>with a ball (sport)</i>	
<i>to kick/throw (a ball)</i>	tirare, fare un tiro
<i>to shoot a goal</i>	fare (un) gol, segnare (un gol/una rete) (football etc.); fare (un) canestro (basketball)
<i>with a camera</i>	
<i>photo</i>	fotografare to photograph fare fotografie (R1-2), scattare fotografie (R2-3) to shoot photos
<i>movie</i>	filmare (qc), riprendere (qc) to film sth girare (un film) to shoot (a film)
<i>figurative</i>	
<i>to shoot heroin</i>	farsi le pere (R1)
NOTE: some fig meanings of “to shoot” (= to do sth fast and/or suddenly), can be translated in Italian by the verb indicating the action modified by an appropriate adverb, such as velocemente, all'improvviso etc.	

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

SHOP, STORE

large shop, store (large variety of goods, with a large staff)			
smaller ↑ ↓ larger	bazar (m) [bad'dzar] messy store with a large variety of goods; bazaar		emporio (R2-3) large store with a large variety of goods
	supermercato, supermarket (m) supermarket, selling mainly food, drinks (including spirits), and household consumable goods		
	grande magazzino (usu pl) (R2-3) department store, usu called by its proper name (e.g. la Rinascente)		
	ipermercato, ipermarket (m) hypermarket, very large supermarket, also selling furniture, electrical goods etc., usu situated on main roads, in the outskirts of cities		
small shop (small variety of goods, with a small staff)			
R1	R2	R3	shopkeeper
negozio shop (gen)			negoziante (m/f)
bottega small and usu specialized shop; ALSO workshop NOTE: the noun has an overtone of subdued simplicity, but is today often used to name small but glitzy establishments			bottegaio/-a (R2-3) (only for low-key shops)
spaccio small shop (usu food, drinks and household goods) ALSO spaccio aziendale , the shop set up by a (small) factory, processing plant etc., to sell directly to the public			NOTE: spacciatore/ spacciatrice usu drug dealer
	boutique (f) [bu'tik] boutique, up-market shop (clothes, accessories etc.)		
	rivendita (di generi alimentari) small food shop		rivenditore/ rivenditrice retailer (gen)
		punto vendita outlet (commercial)	
		esercizio commerciale shop (bureaucratic)	esercente (m/f R3)

TO SHOW

<i>to make sb see sth</i>	
<i>general</i>	fare vedere (qc a qu)
	mostrare (qc a qu)
<i>to point to/at</i>	indicare to indicate, to point to; to denote additare (R2-3) to point to/at
<i>to point out</i>	segnalare (R2-3) to point out
<i>to explain</i>	spiegare to explain
<i>to display</i>	
<i>to give proof (of sth)</i>	dimostrare (qc) to demonstrate, to prove; to show, to display dare prova (di qc) (R2-3) (usu persons as S) to show, to display (esp personal qualities)
<i>to manifest</i>	manifestare (R2-3) (usu person as S), to manifest, to display (feelings etc.) palesare (R3) (usu person as S) to manifest, to make known
<i>to present</i>	presentare (person or thing as S) to present, to offer; (person as S) to show, to produce (esp documents); to introduce
<i>to put on display</i>	esporre to display (concrete objects, e.g. goods for sale, art in exhibitions, notices); ALSO (abstr.) to expound
<i>to reveal, to denote</i>	rivelare (thing as S) to reveal, to show, to display; (person as S) to disclose denotare (R2-3) (usu thing as S) to show, to denote esibire (R2-3) (also concrete, usu person as S) to exhibit, to display (qualities etc.), to show (off); to produce (documents)
<i>to show off</i>	mettere in mostra (also concrete) to display, to show (off) (no exaggeration implied) ostentare (R3) to show off, to flaunt (some exaggeration implied)

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

SIDE

<i>general</i>	
<i>abstract or concrete</i>	lato side (also fig and in polygons) NOTE the expressions: da un lato... dall'altro = on the one hand... on the other hand di lato = sideways parte (f) side (also fig, e.g. da che parte stai? = whose side are you on?); ALSO part, portion; direction, way; region NOTE the expressions (cf. section 25.5.5): da parte = aside; da una parte... dall'altra = on the one hand... on the other hand; d'altra parte = on the other hand (BUT dall'altra parte = on the other side)
<i>usu concrete</i>	fianco side, flank (of human/animal bodies and things in general) NOTE the expressions: di fianco = sideways; a fianco (di qu/qc) = next to sb/sth; fianco a fianco = side by side
<i>specific</i>	
<i>car etc.</i>	fiancata (whole) side (car, building, piece of furniture etc.)
<i>coin, medal</i>	faccia side; face (solid geometry)
<i>edge (gen)</i>	bordo (e.g. sul bordo della strada = on the side/edge of the road) margin (m) margin, edge
<i>of river, lake etc</i>	sponda bank, shore; ALSO the edge of a bed and any side of a billiard/pool table riva bank, shore
<i>of road</i>	banchina (R3)
<i>mountain</i>	parete (f) mountainside, face versante (m R2-3) hillside, mountainside
<i>page</i>	facciata one of the two sides of a page; ALSO façade (building)
<i>team</i>	squadra
<i>other common expressions with “side”</i>	
from all sides	da tutte le parti ; (fig) da tutti i punti di vista
offside (sport)	fuorigioco/fuori gioco
on every side	da tutte le parti ; (= everywhere) dappertutto, ovunque, dovunque
on the side	come attività extra, in più (both expressions R1-2)

SMELL

<i>pleasant</i>		<i>unpleasant</i>	
odore smell (also fig)			
sentore (R3) smell, scent (also fig: avere sentore di qc = to get wind of sth)			
<i>general</i>		<i>general</i>	
profumo (somewhat stronger than buon odore) beautiful smell, scent (esp flowers, herbs, soap etc., but also food, wine etc.); ALSO perfume		puzza/puzzo (R1-2) stench, stink	
		cattivo odore unpleasant smell (polite)	
buon odore nice smell (formal)		<i>specific</i>	
fragranza (R2-3) delicate scent, fragrance (esp flowers, perfumes etc., but also food)		afrore (R3) acid smell, esp of fermenting grapes, sweat etc.	
		esalazione (pestilenziale) (R2-3) unhealthy stench coming from swamps, chemicals etc.	
<i>specific</i>		fetore (R2-3) strong nauseating stench (e.g. corpses)	
<i>food</i>	odorino/profumino (R1-2) (usu) nice smell of (cooked) food	lezzo (R3) stench, esp from filthy things/animals/persons	
	aroma (m) aroma (coffee, wine, herbs etc)	miasma (m R3) stench coming from putrescent organisms, esp in swamps etc.	
<i>wine</i>	bouquet (R3) [bu'kɛ] bouquet		
<i>other</i>	olezzo, effluvio (both R3 poetic) scent (not food)	tanfo (R2-3) stench, esp stuffy, musty, mouldy smell	
NOTE: all the terms in this column can be used ironically in R1 to mean a bad smell		zaffata (R1-2) whiff	
		<i>particular smells</i>	
		odore (R2)/ puzza (R1-2) di muffa musty/mouldy smell	
		odore (R2)/ puzza (R1-2) di chiuso stuffy smell	
		odore (R2)/ puzza (R1-2) di sudore body odor	

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

TO STEAL, TO ROB

	R1	R2	R3
to steal sth	rubare (qc a qu) to steal (sth from sb)		
	scippare qc (a qu) to snatch on the run (usu from a motorcycle) sth (esp handbag) (from sb)		
	portare via qc (a qu) to take away (gen)		
	arraffare (quickly) to grab, to snatch, to pinch		trafugare to steal, to filch
	fregare qc (a qu) (R1*-1) to pinch (from sb); ALSO to trick (sb = qu)	appropriarsi (di qc) to steal, to misappropriate (sth); ALSO to appropriate	
	fare sparire to steal, to pinch	sottrarre (qc a qu) to steal, to remove (sth from sb)	
	grattare to steal	razziare (qc), fare razzia (di qc) to steal sth (by raid, esp livestock, food); ALSO to raid (a place)	
	sgraffignare to pinch (with sleight of hand, often used jokingly)	estorcere (qc a qu) to extort, to wrest (not only valuables, by means of force, threat, deception etc)	
	soffiare to pinch (e.g. boyfriend, parking spot, but usu not valuables)		frodare (qc a qu) (usu money) to steal by fraud (sth from sb); ALSO to swindle (qu di qc = sb out of sth)
to steal sb	rapire qu to kidnap (sb)	sequestrare qu to kidnap (sb); ALSO to confiscate (qc = sth)	
to rob a place	rapinare qc (less common qu) to rob (usu establishments, e.g. bank, esp at gun point)		
	svaligiare to rob, to clean out, to burgle (house, safe, establishments etc.)		
	ripulire qc (less common qu) to clean out (sth, e.g. safe, flat)		depredare (qc) to plunder (a place); ALSO to rob sb (qu)
		saccheggiare (un luogo) to sack, to plunder, to loot (a place)	
to rob sb	derubare qu to rob sb		
	scippare qu to rob sb on the run		
	spennare qu to fleece (not necessarily unlawful; a degree of naivety is implied in the victim)	borseggiare qu (di qc) to pick (sth from sb's) pocket (bag etc.)	
		spogliare qu/un luogo di qc to strip, to clean out sb/a place of sth	

<i>pole, post</i>	palo pole, post (also goal post in football etc.), not only wood, usu stuck in the ground	
	pertica long and thin pole (also in the gymnasium), perch (also measurement), usu wood; also fig (R1) tall person, bean pole	
	asta thin pole, not only wood, eg asta della bandiera = flagpole; (sport) salto con l'asta = pole vault; rod (curtains)	
<i>bar</i>	sbarra bar, barrier (usu metal, but also wood etc.), used esp to restrict access to places or to limit freedom (e.g. in cages, railway crossings)	
	spranga cross-bar (usu metal) used to lock doors; ALSO bar used as a (street) weapon	
	stanga long bar (usu wood), with rectangular/square cross-section; often fig (R1) tall person, bean pole	
	barra (R2-3) bar, esp on boats (helm); also bar of (precious) metal; barra di uranio = rod/bar of uranium; BUT cross bar (sport) = traversa	
<i>cudgel</i>	mazza bludgeon, cudgel, mace (ancient weapon); mace, baton (ceremonial/symbolic); walking stick (less common than bastone); ALSO (sport): club (golf), bat (cricket, baseball), stick (hockey)	
	manganello cudgel, truncheon	
	clava club (usu prehistoric weapon, made of wood)	
	randello big stick for hitting (esp people), cudgel, truncheon (usu wood)	
	sfollagente (m) (short) baton used by police	
<i>slat</i>	stecca (gen) slat, thin rod (usu wood), often used for structural support in corsets (whalebone), umbrellas (rib), shutters or fans (slat), with fractured limbs (splint), in sails; ALSO picket (in a gate); billiard cue	
<i>stake, peg</i>	paletto small post, stake (in fences, to support plants etc.)	
	picchetto picket, stake; tent-peg	
	piolo peg (usu wood, cylindrical; to hang coats etc.); picket; rung (on a ladder)	
<i>stick</i>	bastone (m) stick (gen, also for hitting persons/animals); walking stick; ALSO hockey stick (bastone/mazza da hockey)	
	canna reed; rod, esp canna da pesca = fishing rod; walking stick, cane (less common than bastone); ALSO cross-bar (bicycle); barrel (fire-arms); pipe (organ); flue (chimney)	
	verga (R2-3) small cane or thin, flexible branch, also for hitting persons/animals	
<i>small</i>	bastoncino small stick (in icecreams etc); ALSO bastoncino di pesce = fish finger, fish stick	
	bacchetta small stick (also used for beating at school); wand (e.g. bacchetta magica = magic wand); baton (orchestra conductor)	
<i>other</i>	drumstick (drums)	bacchetta (di tamburo)
	(chicken leg)	coscia di pollo
	joystick (planes)	cloche (f) [klɔʃ] (R2-3), barra di comando (R3)
	(videogames)	joystick (m) [dʒɔɪstɪk]
	stick of dynamite	candelotto di dinamite
<i>twig</i>	ramoscello (secco) (dry) twig	
	stecco dry, leafless twig, small stick; fig (R1) very skinny person	
	sterpo (R2-3) dry, leafless twig; withered thornbush, often pl (= scrub)	

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

STORM

<i>general</i>	
temporale (m) thunderstorm (usu brief and localized, with wind, rain, and often hail)	
	bufera storm, esp with strong winds, often with snow (blizzard)
	burrasca storm, esp at sea
	fortunale (m R2-3) storm, esp with strong winds
perturbazione (R2-3) meteorological disturbance (in official weather forecast)	
procella (R3 literary) storm	
<i>weaker</i> ← → <i>stronger</i>	
<i>specific</i>	
<i>rain</i>	pioggia rain
	acquazzone (m) sudden short downpour
	diluvio heavy rain (usu causing floods), deluge, also fig; NOTE: il diluvio universale = the Flood
	rovescio (R2-3) sudden and very short downpour, shower
	scroscio (di pioggia) (R2-3) sudden and very short shower, downpour of pelting rain; NOTE: scroscio refers to the noise of falling water and also, fig, of applause etc.
	nubifragio (R3) cloudburst, downpour (often causing floods)
<i>hail</i>	grandinata hailstorm
<i>snow</i>	nevicata snowfall, snowstorm
	bufera (di neve) , tormenta snowstorm (with high winds), blizzard
<i>wind</i>	bufera (di vento) windstorm, gale
	mulinello small whirlwind; ALSO whirlpool
	tornado tornado
	tromba d'aria tornado, whirlwind; NOTE: tromba marina = waterspout
	turbine (m R2-3) whirlwind
<i>other: cyclone</i>	ciclone (m R2-3); fig (R1-2) very active person, dynamo
<i>hurricane</i>	uragano also fig, e.g. uragano di proteste
<i>typhoon</i>	tifone (m R2-3) (China Sea or NW Pacific)

STRING

general			
cavo cable		corda rope	spago twine, string
	fune (f R2-3) rope	cordone (m) cordicella cordoncino thin rope	filo thread, wire; filo di perle = string of pearls refe (m R2-3) thread for sewing
thick ←————→ thin			
specific			
lace, tie	laccio lace, tie (gen)	stringa lace (usu shoes)	legaccio (R2-3) strap, tie, lace
G string	perizoma (m)		
hamstring	tendine (m) del ginocchio (humans)/garretto (animals)		
wire cord	corda (in bows, musical instruments etc.); the strings (mus.) = gli archi		
figurative			
series (gen)	serie (f) series (gen)	filza (R2-3)/sfilza (long) series (also of insults)	sequela (R2-3) series (esp of bad things)
chain	catena chain (of events, of hotels, shops etc.; also of mountains)		
of bits	stringa (di bit/caratteri) (R3) string of bits/characters (computers etc.)		
of onions	treccia string (of onions, garlic); lit = plait, braid	filza (R2-3) string (of onions, garlic, sausages etc.)	resta (R3) string of onions/garlic
line (gen)	fila, coda row, line, queue		
moving line	carovana caravan (also of vehicles)		colonna column (of vehicles, persons)
	corteo procession; motorcade	processione procession (usu persons)	sfilata parade (fashion etc); (fig) long line (of cars, houses etc.)
conditions	condizioni (f pl) (vincolanti [R3]), vincoli (m pl R2-3)		

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

STUPID, IDIOT of persons

- The feminine ending of the nouns is indicated if it exists.
- The literal meaning of words used figuratively (for “idiot” or “stupid”) has been indicated (in *italics*, if obsolete or uncommon).
- Although the frequency of use of some of the terms may vary from region to region, those that have been highlighted are frequently heard throughout Italy.
- All the Italian nouns in this table can be used as direct insults.

R	Italian word	n or adj	f	lit meaning	usu meaning
1*	coglione	usu n (m)	-a	testicle	testicle; idiot
	cazzone	usu n (m)	-a	big penis	idiot (Center)
	pirla	n (m)		penis (North)	idiot (North)
1*-1	minchione	usu n (m)	-a	<i>big penis</i> (South)	idiot (Center, South)
	bischero	usu n	-a	<i>penis</i> (Tuscany)	idiot (Tuscany)
1	babbeo	usu n	-a		blockhead, sucker
	baccalà	n (m)		stockfish	idiot
	bietolone	usu n (m)	-a	<i>big beet</i>	simpleton (Tuscany)
	deficiente	usu n (m/f)		(mentally) deficient	idiot
	fesso	usu n	-a	<i>cracked</i> (referring to female genitals)	idiot (R1*-1 South)
	gonzo	usu n	-a		sucker, fool
	grullo	n/adj			simpleton (Tuscany)
	mammalucco	usu n	-a	<i>Mamluk</i>	(childish) simpleton
	merlo	n	-a	blackbird	sucker
	oca	n (f)		goose	fool (esp girl, woman)
	rimbambito	n/adj			imbecile, dotard
	salame	n (m)		salami	idiot
	scimunito	usu n	-a		nitwit, dotard
	testone	usu n (m)	-a	big head	fathead, thickhead
	tonto	usu n	-a		dope
	zuccone	usu n (m)	-a	<i>big pumpkin/head</i>	fathead, thickhead

R	Italian word	n or adj	f	lit meaning	usu meaning
1-2	allocco	m	-a	<i>tawny owl</i>	dunce, idiot
	baggiano	usu n	-a		fool (esp North)
	balordo	n/adj			idiot; silly
	beota	usu n (m/f)		<i>Boeotian</i>	(uncommon) idiot; silly
	citrullo	usu n	-a		idiot, numskull; silly
2	cretino	n/adj			cretin; stupid
	idiota	usu n (m/f)			idiot; idiotic
	imbecille	n/adj			imbecil; stupid
	scemo	n/adj			fool; silly
	semplicione	usu n (m)	-a		simpleton
	stupido	n/adj			idiot; stupid
2-3	duro (di comprendonio)	adj		hard of understanding	slow-witted
	èbete	n/adj			idiot; obtuse
	mentecatto	usu n (m)	-a	insane	lunatic; fool, idiot
	poco intelligente	adj			not very intelligent
	sciocco	n/adj			fool; silly
3	insensato	usu adj			senseless
	insulso	adj			dull, insipid
	ottuso	adj		obtuse (of angles)	obtuse
	stolido	adj			foolish
	stolto	n/adj			fool; foolish

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

STUPID of things

The adjectival use of most of the Italian expressions in the above table is often possible in theory, but in actual terms rather infrequent. With things it appears to be even more limited than with persons. In many cases the adjectives are only found in connection with words relating to sb's expression (e.g. **sguardo**, **espressione**, **aria** etc.). The most common adjectives meaning “stupid” and the “things” with which they tend to be used are listed in the following table.

R	adjective	things usu associated
1	babbeo	look, expression
	deficiente	look, expression
	fesso	idea
	rimbambito	expression
	scimunito	expression
	tonto	expression
1-2	balordo	idea, action, look, expression, speech
	beota	look, expression
2	cretino	idea, action, behavior, expression, speech, joke (verbal and practical)
	idiota	idea, action, behavior, look, expression, speech, joke (verbal and practical)
	imbecille	look, expression
	scemo	joke (verbal)
	stupido	idea, action, behavior, look, expression, speech, word, joke (verbal and practical) etc.
2-3	èbete	look, expression
	poco intelligente	idea, action, behavior, look, expression, speech etc.
	sciocco	idea, behavior, speech, word, joke (esp verbal)
3	insensato	idea, action, behavior, speech, word
	insulso	idea, action, behavior, speech, word, joke (verbal)
	ottuso	look, expression

TO TAKE, TO BRING, TO CARRY (*see also* TO GET HOLD OF)

to take “to”			
general	portare to take, to bring, to carry; to lead, to guide, to accompany		
to carry	avere con sé to have with oneself, to take	trasportare to transport	recare (R.3) to bear (e.g. gifts, news)
to lead	accompagnare to accompany		condurre to drive, to lead, to take/bring (persons)
	guidare to guide		menare (Tuscany) to take (persons, animals); NOTE: outside Tuscany, mostly found in idiomatic expressions (with this meaning)
	scortare (R2-3) to escort		
to take “in”			
general	prendere to take (e.g. appunti (notes), medicine (medicines)); ALSO = to react to events etc. to receive, to get, to catch		
to take “from”			
to take away, to take off	portare via to take away, to carry away		levare, togliere to take off, to take away, to remove (from sth = da qc; from sb = a qu)
	sottrarre (R2) to subtract (math.); (R2-3) to remove, to steal (from sth = da qc; from sb = a qu)		asportare (R.3) to take away, to remove (also surgically) (from sth = da qc; from sb = a qu)
			rimuovere (R.3) to remove (also = to tow away)
NOTE: take-away (of food) = da portar via/da asporto (R.3)			

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

TEACHER

school/university teacher		
kindergarten, primary school teachers (asilo, scuola elementare)	secondary school teachers (scuola media inferiore/superiore)	university teachers (università)
insegnante (m/f) teacher (less common for university)		
docente (m/f R2-3) teacher (gen), lecturer (most common for university); also adj, e.g. il personale docente = the academic/teaching staff		
maestro/-a (d'asilo/di scuola) teacher, also of music, martial arts etc; ALSO = master, also fig	professore/professoressa secondary school teacher, professor	
	prof (m/f R1, students' jargon) secondary school teacher	assistente (m/f) (universitario/-a) assistant lecturer
	ordinario (R2-3) (full) professor (more common for university)	
		titolare (m/f R2-3) cattedratico (R3) professor (holder of a chair)
		lettore/lettrice (R2-3) lector, language tutor
direttore/direttrice	prèside (m/f)	rettore chancellor
capo d'istituto headmaster/headmistress		
other		
istruttore/istruttrice instructor (usu in practical activities, e.g. driving, flying, sailing)	istitutore/istitutrice (R2-3) precettore (R3) tutor (esp in the wealthy/noble families of old or in boarding schools)	
educatore/educatrice (R2-3) educator, pedagogist	pedagogo (R3) pedagogue; (literary) tutor	

THIN (of people)

<i>positive connotation</i>	<i>usu negative connotation</i>	
magro slim, thin, skinny		
àgile agile, slender	deperito (R1-2) run-down, haggard	smilzo skinny
asciutto lean	pelle e ossa (R1-2) skin and bone	denutrito (R2-3) underfed
slanciato slender, tall and slim	rinsecchito (R1-2) skinny, gaunt	scarno (R2-3) lean, skinny
snello slender, slim	sciupato (R1-2) worn-out, skinny, haggard	schelètrico (R2-3) skeletal
	secco (R1-2) skinny	segaligno (R2-3) tall and skinny
	allampanato skinny, gaunt	smunto (R2-3) pale and emaciated, gaunt
	èsile slight, thin	sparuto (R2-3) puny, haggard
	gràcile puny	emaciato (R3) emaciated, haggard
	mingherlino thin and frail	macilento (R3) emaciated, skinny and weak
NOTE: svelto and sottile mean “thin,” “slender” when referring to things; when referring to persons, they usu mean, respectively, “quick” and “sharp,” “subtle”; e.g.: una ragazza dalla corporatura svelta/sottile = a girl of slender build; una ragazza svelta = a quick girl; una ragazza sottile = a subtle/sharp girl		

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

TO THROW

<i>aim usu involved</i>
tirare to throw, to toss; ALSO to pull (see also TO SHOOT)
lanciare to fling, to throw, also fig (e.g. accusations), to launch (a rocket, a product, a star); to toss (a coin etc.)
<i>no aim usu involved</i>
buttare to throw (away), to toss, to fling buttare via = to throw away buttare fuori = to throw out NOTE: buttare (giù) la pasta (R1-2) = put the pasta in boiling water to cook it
gettare to throw (away), to toss, to cast; gettare via = to throw away; NOTE: usa e getta = disposable
scagliare (R2-3) to cast, to fling, to hurl (far away, often with violence), e.g. stones; also fig, e.g. insults
scaraventare (R2-3) to hurl, to fling (far away, often with violence)
proiettare (R3) to throw (forward), to cast, to project (esp lights, shadows); often in the passive (= to be thrown); ALSO (R2-3) to screen (films etc.)

TOOTH

dente (m) tooth (gen), also in saws, combs, cog-wheels (cog), forks and rakes (prong)	zanna tusk, long and protruding tooth in some large animals; sharp tooth of large meat-eating mammals, fang (BUT for snakes dente (velenifero [R3]) is more common)
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TOP

top part			
general	il (di) sopra (R1-2) la parte di sopra (R1-2) la parte superiore (R2-3)		
of clothes	giacca jacket, top (e.g. pyjamas etc.)	top (m) sleeveless top, singlet (usu for women)	
	reggipetto/reggiseno bikini top (usu = brassiere)	(il) pezzo di sopra (R1-2) (the) top piece, bikini top	
surface	superficie (f) top, surface (of liquids etc.)		
cover			
lid, plug	tappo (it usu fits inside the opening it stops) cork, plug; also screw cap	coperchio (it usu sits on top of the opening it closes) lid, cover	cappuccio (it usu sits on and around the top or the tip of the object it covers) cap (esp pens); ALSO hood
roof	tetto roof (buildings, cars, trains etc.)	capote (f R2-3) [ka'pɔt] ca(p)potta soft top, hood (cars)	palato top of the mouth, roof of the mouth, palate
highest point			
general	cima top of trees, mountains, towers, skyscrapers etc. da cima a fondo = from top to bottom, from beginning to end in cima a = on top of, at the top of (e.g. pages) in cima in cima (R1-2) = on the very top		
	NOTE ALSO dall'alto (di qc) = from the top (of sth)		
of mountains	cocùzzolo/cucùzzolo (R1-2), sommità (R2-3), vetta (R2-3), cresta (R3) (also of waves) top, peak, summit		
of pages, lists	principio, inizio beginning		
	NOTE ALSO a capopagina = at the beginning of the page		
figurative			
apex	colmo, cùlmine (m R2-3), vèrtice (m R2-3), àpice (m R3), apogeo (R3) top, height, apex, climax		
best	il massimo (R1-2), il top (R1-2), il/la migliore, il non plus ultra (R2-3) the top, the best		
NOTE: the Italian translation of “top” used with an adjectival value before a noun usu expresses the ideas of “superficial”, “highest” or “last” in a series of levels, and “best”, e.g.: the top layer of the earth’s crust = strato superficiale della crosta terrestre the top layer of a cake = lo strato più alto (or l’ultimo strato) di un dolce the top level = (abstr.) il livello più alto; (= top floor) l’ultimo piano the top player = il giocatore migliore/più bravo BUT top spin = top spin (m) (or, more generically, effetto = spin of a ball)			

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

TO TRY

to try + verb	
provare a + inf to try doing sth (usu as a means to achieve something else: the ability to perform the action expressed by the infinitive is not in question); to have a go at doing sth	cercare di + inf to try to do sth (usu as a goal in itself: the ability to perform the action expressed by the infinitive is in question); to strive to do sth
sforzarsi di + inf to try hard/to strive to do sth	tentare di + inf to attempt to do sth (usu implying little chance of succeeding)
fare del proprio meglio per + inf to try/do one's best to do sth	fare di tutto/fare il possibile per + inf to do everything possible to do sth
vedere di + inf (R1-2) (only present, future and, less common, imperfect) to try to do sth, to try and do sth	
to try + noun	
<i>to try sth</i>	<i>to try sb</i>
provare qc to try sth (ALSO = to taste); to test sth (e.g. a car); to experience sth (esp feelings)	provare con qu to try (with) sb NOTE: provare qu (R2-3) = (in past tenses) to wear sb out
tentare qc to attempt sth	NOTE: tentare qu = to tempt sb
mettere alla prova qc (R2-3) to put sth to the test	mettere alla prova qu (R2-3) to try sb, to put sb to the test
giudicare (R2-3) to try (a legal case); ALSO (R2) to judge	processare qu to try sb (legally)
assaggiare qc to try food/wine, to taste sth	
collaudare qc (R2-3) to test sth, usu professionally (cars, planes etc.)	
sperimentare qc (R2-3) to try out sth; to test sth	

TO VISIT

<i>persons</i>	<i>places</i>
fare (una) visita a qu to visit sb, to pay sb a visit, to call on sb	visitare to visit (e.g. cities, museums etc.); NOTE: visitare qu usu refers to doctors visiting/examining patients
passare da qu (AUX essere) to call on sb, to go/come and see sb; NOTE: with a place, it simply means to pass through, to go/come via that place	
andare/venire a trovare qu (R1-2) to (go/come and) visit sb, to call on sb	andare/venire a vedere to visit (places, monuments etc.); ALSO to go/come and see (lit)
fare un salto da qu (or a/in + place) (R1) fare una scappata da qu (or a/in + place) (R1) to drop in on sb, to dash to sb's place/somewhere	

WALL

<i>internal</i>	<i>external</i>
muro wall (in its lit meaning usu implying construction); also fig, wall, barrier (e.g. muro di critiche/silenzio), wall-like structure, esp as a barrier (e.g. muro di ghiaccio/roccia)	
parete (f) wall, usu internal or seen from the inside, both man made (e.g. in houses, boxes) and natural (in caves, body parts etc); ALSO = mountainside	barriera barrier; also fig, barrier, obstacle, wall (also in football)
	muraglia large wall, usu fortified, e.g. la (grande) muraglia cinese = the Great Wall of China
(muro) divisorio (R2-3) tramezzo (R2-3) partition (wall)	muraglione (m) very large wall, often built for retaining purposes
	muretto, muricciolo low (boundary/enclosure) wall

3 Fields of meaning – “Synonyms”

WINDOW (see also GLASS)

<i>in buildings</i>	<i>in means of transportation</i>
finestra window	finestrino (side) window
portafinestra French window	parabrezza windscreen (usu car)
sportello office window, counter, teller	lunotto (R2-3) rear window (car)
vetrata large window, consisting of a number of glass panes inserted in a frame, esp stained-glass window (in churches etc.)	oblò (R2-3) porthole, round window on ships
vetrina shop window; ALSO glass-fronted cupboard, glass showcase	
rosone (m R3) rose-window	

WORK, JOB

general		
lavoro work (ALSO = piece of work), job, employment, occupation		
job, employment		
impiego job, position, post (usu “white collar”); employment; ALSO = use,	occupazione job; employment (unemployment = disoccupazione)	posto job, position, post posto di lavoro = job (in statistics etc.), e.g. 100 posti di lavoro = 100 jobs
job to do, task, duty		
commissione errand	cómpito task, duty; homework (usu pl)	dovere duty
faccenda job, e.g. faccende domestiche/di casa = housework; ALSO thing (to do), matter	carica (R2-3) office, position (usu official and important)	incarico (R2-3) task, assignment, charge; ALSO (important) post, usu temporary
funzione (R2-3) (often pl) function, position, duty	incombenza (R3) (important) duty, task	mansione (R3) (usu pl) duty, function
ufficio (R3) office		
job done, service, piece of work		
opera piece of work	servizio service	prestazione (R2-3) (usu pl) services (often of professional people); ALSO performance
NOTE: questa è opera tua = this is your work (= you must have done this) questo è compito tuo = this is your job (= this is what you have to do)		
labor		
fatica toil, labor, hard work; NOTE: fare fatica (a fare qc) = to struggle (to do sth)	mano (f) d’opera labor (gen, as a component of invoices etc.), e.g. il costo della mano d’opera è alto = labor costs are high	
trade, profession, occupation		
mestiere trade	professione profession	attività activity (gen), occupation, e.g. svolgere un’attività = to do something (as a job), to have an occupation

4 Complex verbal expressions

This chapter deals with common Italian verbs or verbal expressions that do not have a direct equivalent in English (see also chapter 6, “Idioms, similes, and proverbs”).

4.1 Single English verbs corresponding to complex Italian expressions

English verb	Italian expression
to agree (with sb on sth)	essere d'accordo (con qu su qc)
to annoy sb	(usu) dare fastidio a qu
to blame sb/sth	dare la colpa a qu/qc
to borrow	prendere in prestito
to lend	dare in prestito/prestare NOTE: chiedere in prestito = to ask to borrow
to butt sb/sth	dare una testata a qu/qc ; (for horned animals) dare una cornata
to compete (commercially)	fare (la) concorrenza a qc/qu
to drop sth (to let sth fall)	lasciare cadere qc
to drop sth (to cause sth to fall)	fare cadere qc
to feed sb	dare da mangiare a qu (people or animals) NOTE: for plants, fertilizzare – for things, rifornire (machines), alimentare (fires etc.)
to haggle (over sth)	tirare sul prezzo (di qc) (R1–2) ALSO contrattare (R2–3, used without object)
to hurt sb I have a headache my feet are hurting	fare male a qu mi fa male la testa/ho mal di testa mi fanno male i piedi

English verb	Italian expression
to kick sb/sth	dare un calcio a qu/qc (one kick) prendere a calci qu/qc (one or more kicks, usu with violence, anger etc.) NOTE: calciare (R2–3) (usu with things as DO) is uncommon and mostly restricted to sports like football (calcio), e.g. calciare il pallone
to listen to sb (= to listen to sb's advice) listen to me (= follow my advice)	dare retta a qu (R1–2) dammi retta
to lock (a door etc.)	chiudere a chiave (e.g. una porta) NOTE: to lock sb/sth somewhere = rinchiudere qu/qc da qualche parte
to miss sb/sth I miss you	sentire la mancanza di qu/qc sento la tua mancanza (OR mi manchi [from mancare])
to need sb/sth	avere bisogno di qu/qc
to nod to nod affirmatively	accennare, fare un cenno col capo/con la testa accennare, fare cenno di sì col capo/con la testa
to notice sb/sth, to attach importance to sb/sth not to notice sb/sth; to ignore sb/sth; not to worry about sb/sth I didn't notice (it) don't worry (about it)/ignore it! think about it!	fare caso a qu/qc (R1–2) non fare caso a qu/qc (R1–2) non ci ho fatto caso (R1–2) non farci caso! (R1–2) facci caso! (R1)
to punch sb/sth (with fists)	dare un pugno a qu/qc
to smack sb	dare uno schiaffo a qu (one smack) prendere a schiaffi qc (one or more smacks, usu with violence, anger etc.) NOTE: schiaffeggiare (R2–3) (= prendere a schiaffi) is less common
to smack a (child's) bottom	sculacciare (R1–2)
to starve	(tr) far morire di fame qu (ALSO lit = to starve sb to death); affamare is less common (intr) morire di fame (also fig); avere una fame da lupo (fig only)
to trip sb	fare lo sgambetto a qu, fare inciampare qu

4.2 Single Italian verbs corresponding to complex English expressions

Italian verb	English expression
accendere, spegnere	turn on/off, switch on/off BUT to turn on/off a tap = aprire/chiudere un rubinetto
addormentarsi	to go to sleep, to fall asleep
allunare	to land on the moon
ammalarsi	to become sick
ammarare	to land on water (esp the sea); to splash down
apparecchiare/sparecchiare (la tavola)	to set/to clear the table (for/after a meal)
appisolarsi	to nod off
approfittare di qc/qu	to take advantage of sth/sb NOTE: in Italian, as in English, the use of this verb with a person as object usually has a negative sexual connotation (= to seduce, to rape)
approfondire (un argomento)	to study (a topic) more in depth
degnarsi di + inf (ironic)	to be bothered to do sth, e.g. non si è degnato di venire = he couldn't be bothered coming
distare da qc/qu	to be far from sth/sb, e.g. quanto dista casa tua dal centro? = how far is your place from the town centre?
guardarsi (bene) dal/dall'/dallo + inf	to take (great) care not to do sth, e.g. si è guardato bene dal venire = he took great care/made a point not to come/of not coming
limitarsi a + inf	to do sth and no more: si è limitata a guardarlo = she only looked at him/it
pernottare (R2–3)	to spend the night (usu in relation to a location)
spiccare	to stand out
valere	to be worth (with an expression of value), to be valuable; to be valid
NOTE: non vale! (R1)	it's not fair!

4.3 Complex Italian expressions corresponding to complex English expressions

(cf. section 27.8)

Italian expression	English expression
andare a male (intr)	to go off (food, drinks)
avere a che fare con qu	to have sth to do with sb
avere ragione/torto dare ragione a qu	to be right/wrong to agree with sb, to say that sb is right, to prove sb right (of events)
dare torto a qu	to judge sb wrong, to say that sb is wrong, to prove sb wrong (of events)
fare a meno di qu/qc non poter fare a meno di + inf	to do without sb/sth not to be able to avoid doing sth
fare causa a qu (R1–2), intentare un processo/una causa a/contro qu (R2–3) ALSO quite common is denunciare qu (R1–2)	to take sb to court to sue sb
fare in modo che + subj fare in modo/vedere (R1–2) di + inf farò in modo che tu ci sia farò in modo/vedrò di esserci (cf. section 27.7)	to see that I shall see that you are there I shall see that I am there
farsi una colpa di qc	to feel guilty/responsible for/over sth non fartene una colpa! = don't feel guilty about it
mettersi/schierarsi (R2–3) dalla parte di qu	to take sb's side
tenere conto di qu/qc	to take sb/sth into account
tenere presente qc	to bear sth in mind
essere solito fare qc (R2–3) NOTE: the use of solere (R3, defective) is uncommon and usu restricted to some persons of the imperfect and the present tense (indic)	to be used to doing sth

4.4 Italian “impersonal” verbs

The verbs in this section are often referred to as “impersonal,” since they are often used in the third person singular and appear to be lacking a subject. In fact, in those cases you will usually find that they have a whole clause as subject. For the student, the main difficulty with these verbs lies in their construction. Characteristically, for the majority of them, the Italian indirect object will correspond to the subject in English and, when applicable, the Italian subject will correspond to the direct object of the commonly used English equivalent, e.g. **mi** (IO) **piace la pizza** (s) = **I** (s) like **PIZZA** (DO). In the following table, the personally constructed English equivalents have been indicated in italics in square brackets, beside a more literal translation of the Italian verbs, whenever possible.

In the following table, only the meanings and uses relevant to the topic of this section have been taken into account. Different meanings and constructions may be possible, for some verbs, in different contexts.

When used as below, all the Italian verbs are intransitive and take **essere** as auxiliary.

andare a qu non mi va ti andrebbe un caffè? gli andava di uscire non mi andava che tu uscissi da sola	to suit sb [<i>to feel like</i>] I don't feel like it would you (feel) like a coffee? he felt like going out I didn't like the idea of you going out on your own
avanzare (a qu) avanzano 10 euro mi avanzano 10 euro ci è avanzato del pane	to be left over [<i>to have sth left over</i>] There is ten euro left over I have ten euro left over we have some bread left over
bastare (a qu) basta! basta così! (mi/ti/ . . .) bastano 50 centesimi non ti bastava vederlo? ci basta che tu ti sia pentito non le sono bastati i soldi non le bastavano i soldi ALSO: basta che (R1–2) basta che lui lo chieda te lo do: basta che te ne vai (R1) / vada (R1–2)	to be enough stop it/enough! that's enough! 50 cents are enough (for me/you/ . . .) wasn't it enough for you to see it? it is enough for us that you are sorry she has run out of money she didn't have enough money provided that he only has to ask for it I'll give it to you if you go away
capitare (a qu) gli capitò un fatto strano BUT: se capiti da queste parti se ti capita di venire a Roma mi è capitato di sentirla ieri	to happen a strange thing happened to him if you happen to be around here if you happen to come to Rome I happened to hear (from) her yesterday

convenire ci conviene farlo adesso conviene che tu lo dica/ti conviene dirlo	to be better [<i>to have to</i> and similar] we'd better do it now it's better for you to say it/you'd better say it/you should say it
dispiacere mi dispiace lasciarti qui ci è dispiaciuto che tu ti sia offeso ti dispiace chiudere la porta? vi dispiace se me ne vado?	[<i>to be sorry, to mind</i>] I am sorry to leave you here we were sorry that you took offence do you mind closing the door? do you mind if I go?
importare non importa non m'importa/non me ne importa non importa che lui non ci sia/se lui non c'è (R1–2) t'importa che lui non ci sia/se lui non c'è (R1–2)? non c'importa di stancarci t'importa di lui? che t'importa? (R1)	to be important, to matter [<i>to care, to mind</i>] it doesn't matter I don't care it doesn't matter that he is not here/if he's not here do you care/mind if he's not here? we don't mind getting tired/we don't care if we get tired do you care about him? what do you care?
NOTE: without an indirect object this verb is mostly used in negative sentences: in affirmative contexts essere importante tends to be preferred.	
mancare (a qu) gli manca molto la mamma mi mancano dieci euro le mancano tre pagine per finire gli manca un pezzo vi manca l'energia qui ci manca il sale (R1–2) a questo libro manca una pagina/in questo libro ci manca una pagina (R1–2) mancare di qc (R2–3) non manchi di nulla (R2–3, less common than qui non ti manca nulla) questo sugo manca di sale (R2–3, less common than in questo sugo ci manca il sale [R1–2])	to be lacking, to be missed (by sb) [<i>to lack, to miss, to need</i>] he misses his mother very much I'm missing ten euro/I need an extra ten euro she has three pages to go he's missing a piece you're lacking the energy there is no (<i>or not enough</i>) salt here this book is missing a page/there is a page missing from this book to lack sth you have everything this sauce lacks salt
occorrere (a qu) vi occorre niente/qualcosa? non occorre che tu ci vada	to be necessary, to be needed (by sb) [<i>to need, to have to</i>] do you need anything?/anything you need? it's not necessary for you to go (there)/you don't have to go (there)

piacere	to be pleasing [<i>to like</i>]
questo film mi piace	I like this movie
non ci piacciono i funghi	we don't like mushrooms
non le piace uscire	she doesn't like going out
non mi piace che tu rimanga qui	I don't like you remaining here
riuscire	to succeed, to manage to, to be able to
non riesco a correre	I can't run
sei riuscito a parlarle?	did you manage to speak to her?
BUT non mi riesce di contattarlo	I am not able to contact him
il solitario ci è riuscito	we've succeeded in (finishing) our game of patience
sembrare, parere (a qu)	(lit) to seem, to look (like) [<i>to think</i>]
mi sembravi/parevi un altro	you looked like someone else
pare/sembra che sia partito	it looks like he's left/he appears to have left
BUT non mi sembra che lei ci sia	I don't think she is here
mi pare di no	I don't think so
le è sembrato di vederlo	she thinks she saw him
le pare/sembra di averlo visto	she thinks she saw him (OR has seen him)
servire	to be needed [<i>to need</i>]
mi serve un cacciavite	I need a screwdriver
gli servivano più soldi (R1–2)	he/they needed more money
NOTE: in the compound tenses servire tends to mean “to be useful,” “to use”, e.g.:	
ti sono serviti i miei appunti? = were my notes of any use to you?/did you find my notes useful?/did you use my notes?	
toccare (a qu)	to be necessary [<i>to have to</i>]
mi è toccato rifarlo	I've had to do it again
ci tocca pagare	we have to pay
NOTE: a chi tocca? tocca a me = whose turn is it? it's my turn	

4.5 Verbal expressions with *la*, *ne*, *ci*

Even though for some of the expressions given here a literal meaning may still be possible in suitable contexts, most of them are generally used idiomatically, whereby **la** and **ne** do not refer specifically to anything or anybody, and **ci** has no connotation of place.

NOTE that the idiomatic use of many of the following tends to be restricted to specific tenses.

4.5.1 Idiomatic verbal expressions with **la**

La is feminine singular and requires agreement where appropriate, e.g. **non ce la siamo sentita di venire** (= we didn't feel like coming); **lui non ce l'ha fatta** (= he didn't make it)

averla/avercela (R1–2) con qu	to be angry with sb
berla/bersela (R1–2)	to swallow (= to believe)
cavarsela (R1–2)	to scrape through; to be reasonably good (at sth), e.g. a tennis se la cava = s/he's not too bad at tennis
credersela (R1)	to think highly of oneself
darla a bere (R1–2)/ intendere	to lead sb to believe sth
farcela (a + inf)	to make it, e.g. non ce la faccio = I can't do it; BUT non ce la faccio più = I am really tired; I can't go on any more
farla finita (R1)	to stop (doing sth), e.g. falla finita! = stop it!
farla finita (R1–2)	to commit suicide
farla/dirla grossa (R1–2)	to do/say a very stupid thing
farla franca (R1–2)	to get away (with sth)
farla lunga (R1)	to go on and on in an argument or discussion, e.g. quanto la fai lunga! = you go on and on . . . !
fidarsela (R1)	to feel up to sth
filarsela/squagliarsela/svignarsela/battersela (all R1)	to run away, to flee
finirla/smetterla (di + inf) (both R1 –2)	to stop (doing sth), e.g. smettetela! = stop it! finitela di litigare! = stop arguing!
intendersela (con qu) (R1–2)	to have a secret understanding/affair (with sb)
passarla bella/brutta (R1–2)	to get through a bad experience
passarsela (R1)	to be (doing), e.g. come te la passi? how are you doing?
piantarla (di + inf) (R1)	to stop doing sth, e.g. piantala! = stop it!
prendersela (con qu)	to get cross (with sb)
saperla lunga	to know a thing or two
scamparla (bella) (R1–2)	to have a narrow escape
sentirsela (di + inf) (R1–2)	to feel up to sth/like sth
tirlarla per le lunghe (R1–2)	to take too long a time over sth
vedersela (con qu)(R1–2)	to deal with sb, e.g. con te me la vedo più tardi = I'll deal with you later; véditela tu! = you sort it out/see what you can do!
vedersela brutta	to feel all is lost

4.5.2 Idiomatic verbal expressions with **ne**

NOTE that **ne** is used with a locative value in **andarsene**, **tornarsene**, **uscirsene** and **starsene** (*starsene da parte*, *starsene per conto proprio* etc. seem to have an element of distance from something). In **non poterne più** and **importarsene**, **ne** has a more or less generic genitive value.

andarsene	to go away
non poterne più	to have had enough (of sth/sb)
importarsene	to care (about sth/sb), esp negative or interrogative, e.g.:
NOTE: infischarsene (R1*-1), fregarsene (R1*), fottersene (R1*) are much less polite alternatives	non me ne importa un fico secco (R1) = I couldn't care less chi se ne importa? (R1-2) = who cares?
starsene	to stay, to be
tornarsene in qualche luogo	to go back somewhere
uscirsene	to go out; ALSO (R1-2) to say something unexpectedly, e.g.: se n'è uscito dicendo che . . . = he came out saying that . . . se n'è uscito con una parolaccia = he came out with a swear word
volerne a qu (R2-3)	to hold it against sb, e.g. non me ne volere = don't hold it against me

4.5.3 Idiomatic verbal expressions with **ci**

In some of the following expressions, the originally locative **ci** is used with the value “for it,” “about it,” or “to it.” This indirect pronominal use of **ci** is quite common in many Italian dialects and regional varieties, where it is often extended to people (**che ci hai fatto, a tuo fratello?** [R1] = what did you do to your brother?) (cf. section 16.2).

andarci matto (R1)	to be crazy for it
averci (R1)	to have, to own
badarci	to care about sth, e.g. non ci badare = don't worry about it
contarci	to count on sth, e.g. ci contavo = I was counting on it
crederci	to believe sth, e.g. non ci credo = I don't believe it

entrarci	to have to do with sth, e.g. che c'entra? = what's it got to do with it?
mancarci	to be lacking (fig and ironically), e.g. ci mancava solo questa! = (ironic) that's all we needed!; ci manca (mancherebbe) soltanto che piova (piovesse)! = let's only hope it doesn't rain!; ci mancherebbe (altro)! = that would be the limit, of course, not at all; c'è mancato poco! = that was close!; ci manca poco = there is not long to go
metterci	to take (in time expressions), e.g. ci hai messo una vita! (R1) = it took you ages! (lit "a lifetime") NOTE: the literal meaning of this verb (= to put sth into sth else) is quite common, e.g. ci ho già messo il sale = I have already put salt in it; also fig, e.g. ci devi mettere più energia = you must put more energy into it
parlarci (R1–2)	to speak to sb, e.g. con lui non ci parlo = I don't (want to) speak to him
pensarci	to think about sth (or sb [R1])
provarci (R1–2)	to try
provarci con qu (R1)	to make sexual advances to sb
riuscirci	to manage to do sth, e.g. non ci riesco = I can't do it
sentirci	to be able to hear
starci (R1–2)	to agree to sth, to accept sth, e.g. ci sto = I'm in it ALSO starci = entrarci , e.g. in cinque nell'ascensore non ci stiamo = (the) five of us can't fit in the lift/elevator NOTE: in Southern Italy, starci usually means esserci , e.g. ci sta Ciro? = is Ciro there?
tenerci (a qc)	to care a lot about sth
vederci	to be able to see
volerci	to take (in order to do sth), e.g. non ci vuole molto = it doesn't take much (time or effort or even money); che ci vuole? = what does it take (to do that)?, usu ironic for "that's not difficult!"

5 Affective suffixes

These suffixes are usually listed, in Italian grammars, under the heading **alterazione**, and the words modified by them are called **alterati**. Among them we find nouns, adjectives, a handful of adverbs, and also some verbs.

The use of **alterati** is very common in spoken Italian (R1, R1–2). It is often characterized by affective overtones, which, in some cases, can neutralize and even reverse the face value of the alteration. **Cattivaccio**, for instance, can express fondness as well as disapproval (cf. English *naughty*); **tardino**, literally *a little late*, can be used ironically to mean *very late*. The basic value of the alteration associated with each suffix, however, should not be overlooked. In fact, there are many instances where the modified term has acquired a life of its own, generating in turn some more or less lexicalized alterations (see section 2.3.2).

- carta** (paper) > **cartella** (*page, file, folder, briefcase, schoolbag*)
 - > **cartellina** (*small cartella*);
- > **cartello** (*notice, placard, sign*)
 - > **cartellone** (*bill, poster*);
- > **cartoccio** (*paper wrap, often in the shape of a cone*)
 - > **cartoccetto**, **cartoccino** (*small cartoccio*),
 - > **cartoccione** (*large cartoccio*);
- > **cartone** (m) (*cardboard*)
 - > **cartoncino** (*light cardboard, card*),
- > **cartuccia** (*cartridge*).

On the other hand, some terms, in spite of their appearance, were never obtained through alteration. **Bottino** (*booty*) and **bottone** (*button*), for example, did not derive from **botte** (*cask*), **botto** (*blow, shot, bang*), or **botta** (*blow, bump*), but from French words.

The gender of nouns is given only where it is not predictable from the principles given in ch. 14.

In some words, an accent is used to indicate the main stress but should not be used when writing. See p. 29.

The suffixes for nouns, adjectives and adverbs have been divided into two groups, diminutive and augmentative. Positive (fondness, admiration) or negative (disapproval, contempt) overtones can be found in both groups. The suffixes for verbs are listed separately.

Apart from the specific destination of some suffixes and a tendency to avoid awkward repetitions (**cuscinetto**, but not **cuscinino**; **lettino** but not **lettetto**; **astuccino**, but not **astucciuccio**, and so on), there is no precise rule to determine which words can take which suffixes: only experience can tell. The lists that follow are only an approximate guide to the intrinsic value of some suffixes.

It is possible to have two suffixes in succession, e.g. **tavolinetto** (*nice little table*); **tavolinuccio** (*insignificant little table*); **omaccione** (*big ugly man*); **casettina** (*nice little house*); **grassottello** (*plumpish*).

Altered adjectives follow the noun they modify.

Only a handful of adverbs admit suffixes. The most common are:

adagio, bene, male, piano, forte, poco, tanto, presto, tardi.

Altered adverbs are often preceded (in R1) by reinforcing, although ultimately redundant, adverbial expressions such as **un po'**, e.g. **un po' prestino**. Similarly, some altered nouns are sometimes accompanied (in R1–2) by reinforcing adjectives such as **grande** and **piccolo**, e.g. **un gran macchinone, un piccolo lettino**.

Suffixes are given with their masculine singular ending, when applicable.

5.1 Diminutive suffixes

Suffix	Notes and examples
-ino (with -(i)cino and -olino)	The most common diminutive suffixes. They can express cuteness and fondness, e.g. manina = (<i>cute</i>) <i>little hand</i>; cuoricino = (<i>dear</i>) <i>little heart</i>; topolino = (<i>cute</i>) <i>little mouse</i> (Topolino is Italian for <i>Mickey Mouse</i>). Some feminine nouns may become masculine when altered with -ino, e.g. pentola > pentolino (as well as pentolina) = <i>small pot</i>. With adjectives and adverbs they tend to have an attenuating value, e.g. magrolino = <i>a little skinny</i>; verdino = <i>light green, greenish</i>; benino = <i>fairly well</i>. NOTE: nouns in -one/-ona are usu restricted to the suffix -cino, e.g. scarpone (<i>mountain boot</i>) > scarponcino; poltrona > poltroncina.

Suffix	Notes and examples
-etto	Very common suffix, generally used with affectionate overtones, e.g. bacetto = <i>nice little kiss</i> ; casetta , <i>cute little house</i> . It attenuates adjectives, e.g. piccoletto = <i>a bit small</i> . Apart from un pochetto (<i>a little bit</i>), with its variation un pochettino , it is not used with adverbs.
-ello (with -(i)cello and -erello)	Quite common diminutive suffixes, similar in meaning to the ones above, but not used with adverbs, e.g. alberello = (<i>delicate</i>) <i>little tree</i> ; venticello = <i>nice gentle breeze</i> ; focherello = <i>small fire</i> (NOTE the regular disappearance of the “dittongo mobile” and preservation of the [k] sound of fuoco); cattivello = <i>a bit naughty</i> ; pazzerello = <i>a bit mad</i> (in a nice way).
-uccio (-uzzo)	This diminutive suffix can express a certain degree of endearment, as when used with proper nouns (e.g. Carluccio), or nouns like ziuuccio = <i>dear uncle</i> , boccuccia = <i>cute little mouth</i> etc., but also contempt, e.g. avvocatuccio = <i>little-known, incompetent lawyer</i> . With adjectives it is attenuating, e.g. calduccio = (<i>nice and</i>) <i>warm</i> ; deboluccio = <i>a bit weak</i> .
-icciolo (-icciuolo)	As with the previous suffix, smallness as expressed through this suffix can convey a sense of cuteness, e.g. festicciola = <i>small, intimate party</i> , porticciolo = (<i>nice</i>) <i>little port</i> , or a sense of insignificance, e.g. donnicciola = <i>small insignificant woman</i> . Not for adjectives or adverbs.
-ùcolo	This suffix is used only with nouns and has pejorative overtones, e.g. poetucolo = <i>worthless poet</i> .
-olo (-uolo)	A rather neutral diminutive suffix, e.g. montagnola = <i>small mountain, mound</i> ; capannola = <i>small hut</i> .

Suffix	Notes and examples
-otto	A variation of -etto, this suffix is used to indicate the young of some animals (e.g. aquilotto = <i>eaglet</i>), and it can add a note of likable clumsiness to the nouns with which it combines, e.g. contadinotto = <i>a stout peasant</i>. At times it may lose its diminutive character: a ragazzotto is not necessarily smaller than a ragazzo. Some feminine nouns can turn masculine when modified by this suffix, e.g. candela > candelotto = <i>short and thick candle</i>. With adjectives it has an attenuating effect, e.g. piccolotto = <i>somewhat small</i> (usually of persons); vecchiotto = <i>rather old</i>.
-acchiotto	Mostly found in the words for young animals: orsacchiotto = <i>young bear, teddy bear</i>; lupacchiotto = <i>young wolf</i>. Also used with a moderating effect with a few adjectives, e.g. furbacchiotto = <i>quite cunning</i>.
-iciattolo	This diminutive suffix is only used with nouns and expresses contempt: fumiciattolo = <i>small and insignificant river</i>; omiciattolo = <i>small and insignificant man</i>; mostriaticcolo = <i>insignificant ugly creature, small monster</i>.
-ónzolo	Used with a few nouns, it has a pejorative connotation, e.g. mediconzolo = <i>incompetent doctor</i>; paperonzolo = <i>clumsy gosling</i>.
-iccio	For adjectives only. This basically attenuating suffix adds a note of imperfection or approximation to the adjectives or adjectival past participles it alters, e.g. malaticcio = <i>sickly</i>; bruciaticcio = <i>half burned</i>; sudaticcio = <i>rather sweaty</i>. It sometimes corresponds to the English suffix <i>-ish</i>, e.g. rossiccio = <i>reddish</i>. Its use has been extended to a few nouns, but with a tendency to lexicalization, e.g. terriccio = <i>rich soil suitable for potting</i> (from terra, with a change of gender).
-igno	For adjectives only. Less frequent than -iccio, this suffix also expresses approximation, e.g. asprigno = <i>sourish</i>.

Suffix	Notes and examples
-ògnolo	For adjectives only and similar in value to the previous, e.g. amarognolo = <i>bitterish</i> , this suffix is especially used with colors, e.g. verdognolo = <i>greenish</i> ; giallognolo = <i>yellowish</i> .
-occio	Used only with adjectives, it has an attenuating value and it is often used jokingly, e.g. belloccio = <i>kind of good looking</i> ; grassoccio = <i>plump(ish)</i> .

5.2 Augmentative suffixes

Possibly because of an overlapping in meaning with the superlative, the use of these suffixes with adjectives results in substantivization. To translate *he is very bad*, beside **è cattivissimo/molto cattivo** etc., we can use **è un cattivone**, but not **è cattivone**.

Suffix	Notes and examples
-one	The most common augmentative suffix, it conveys the idea of bigness, e.g. ragazzone = <i>big boy</i> , librone = <i>big book</i> , or even greatness, e.g. professorone (R1) = <i>eminent professor</i> . It may change the gender of feminine nouns, e.g. bottiglia > bottiglione (as well as bottigliona) = <i>big bottle</i> ; donna > donnone (as well as donnona) = <i>big woman</i> . Substantivized adjectives are reinforced by -one , e.g. pigrone = <i>very lazy person</i> , and so is also the adverb bene : benone = <i>very well</i> . NOTE: nouns like chiacchierone (<i>chatterbox</i>) or mangione (<i>big eater</i>), being derived from verb stems, are not proper “alterati.”
-accio (-azzo)	This is the most common pejorative suffix, e.g. libraccio = <i>very bad book</i> , ragazzaccio = <i>very rude boy</i> , coltellaccio = <i>big (threatening) knife</i> .
-astro	Quite common suffix. With nouns it conveys contempt, e.g. poetaastro = <i>a bad poet</i> ; with adjectives, it expresses approximation, sometimes with a hint of dislike, e.g. biancastro = <i>whitish, off-white</i> ; dolciastro = <i>sweetish</i> .

Suffix	Notes and examples
-acchione	Less frequent and productive than the previous ones, this suffix can be used with joking affection as well as in a pejorative sense, e.g. fratacchione = <i>big jolly friar</i> or <i>big fat friar</i> .

5.3 Suffixes for verbs

These suffixes are in general less productive than most of the suffixes for nouns and adjectives. Some of them are found in only very few verbs.

Suffix	Notes and examples
-acchiare -icchiare -ucchiare	These suffixes generally indicate the irregular repetition of the action in a somewhat weakened form, e.g. sparacchiare = <i>to shoot at irregular intervals and without much care</i> ; canticchiare = <i>to sing softly, absent-mindedly, with pauses</i> ; mangiucchiare = <i>to nibble</i> .
-ellare -arellare -erellare	These suffixes have a diminutive and iterative value, e.g. saltellare , saltarellare / salterellare = <i>to skip, to hop</i> ; giocherellare = <i>to play absent-mindedly with sth, to fiddle with sth</i> .
-ettare -ottare	These are quite similar in meaning to the previous suffixes: e.g. fischiettare = <i>to whistle away (a tune)</i> (usually softly and rather absent-mindedly); parlottare = <i>to chat in a low voice</i> .
-ucolare	This suffix has a diminutive value and is only found in piagnucolare (from piagnere , a non-standard form of piangere) = <i>to whine, to whinge</i> .
-uzzare	Like some of the above, this suffix has a diminutive and iterative connotation, e.g. tagliuzzare = <i>to cut into (many) small bits</i> .

6 Idioms, similes, and proverbs

Idioms, similes, and proverbs are the spices of all natural languages. Italian offers a great choice of such colourful “ingredients.” In fact, since the popular tradition from which so many of these locutions originate is inextricably intertwined with the dialects, the average native Italian speaker will also use a whole range of idioms and proverbs with more or less accentuated dialectal overtones. The latter are typically at an R1 (or R1*) level. Conversely, the use of idioms, similes, and proverbs in standard Italian – of which the lists below are but very small samples – is generally closer to R2 (and above).

6.1 Idioms

The following idioms are sorted according to their cardinal word or group of words. The latter are underlined when not in initial position, for ease of consultation.

With regard to all the expressions with **avere**, it should be pointed out that in colloquial Italian **averci** is much more common, e.g. **c’ha** [tʃa] **la faccia tosta**.

R1* vulgar or indecent

R1 informal,
colloquial

R2 neutral, unmarked

R3 formal, written
Italian words and
expressions are R2
unless otherwise
indicated. See also
p. 5.

In some words, an
accent is used to
indicate the main stress
but should not be used
when writing. See
p. 29.

	Italian idiom	English equivalent
A	essere con/avere l' <u>acqua</u> alla gola	to be in deep water, to be in great difficulties
	fare <u>acqua</u> (da tutte le parti) (lit and fig)	(lit) to take in water (everywhere); (fig, of argument) not to hold water (at all)
	acqua in bocca! (R1)	mum's the word
	essere/trovarsi/navigare in cattive <u>acque</u>	to be in dire straits
	dormire/riposare sugli <u>allori</u> (R2–3)	to rest on one's laurels
	scoprire gli <u>altarini</u> (di qu) (R1)	to find out sb's secrets (not seriously)
	andare a ruba	to go/sell like hot cakes
	darsi delle (R1–2)/ molte (R1–2)/ un sacco di (R1) <u>arie</u>	to put on airs
	avere un asso nella manica	to have a trick up one's sleeve
	lasciare/piantare in <u>asso</u> qu	to leave sb high and dry
	fare l'<u>avvocato</u> del diavolo	to play devil's advocate
B	piantare <u>baracca e burattini</u> (R1–2)	to drop/to leave everything
	mettere il <u>bastone</u> tra le ruote	to put a spoke in the wheel
	chiudere il <u>becco</u> (R1)	to shut up
	essere la <u>bestia nera</u> (di qu)	to be sb's bugbear
	passare una notte in <u>bianco</u> in <u>bianco</u> e nero	to have a sleepless night black and white (films etc.) BUT in black and white (in writing) = nero su bianco , e.g. mettiamo nero su bianco = let's put it in writing
	restare/rimanere a <u>bocca aperta</u> (R1)	to be left gaping, open-mouthed (in bewilderment, surprise, admiration)
	tornare a <u>bomba</u> (R1–2)	to get back to the point
	sentirsi cascare le <u>braccia</u> (R1)	to lose hope
	a <u>bruciapelo</u>	point-blank; (fig) suddenly, unexpectedly, e.g. fare una domanda a bruciapelo

	Italian idiom	English equivalent
C	rimandare alle <u>calende greche</u> (R2–3)	to put sth off until doomsday
	nascere con la <u>camicia</u>	to be born lucky
	sudare sette <u>camicie</u>	to work really hard, to sweat blood
	menare il <u>can</u> per l'aia (R2–3)	to beat about the bush
	tirato per i <u>capelli</u>	far-fetched
	spaccare un <u>capello</u> in quattro	to split hairs
	non avere né <u>capo</u> né coda	to have neither rhyme nor reason
	salvare <u>capra</u> e cavoli (R1–2)	to have one's cake and eat it
	in <u>carne</u> ed ossa (R1–2)	in the flesh, in person
	mettere troppa <u>carne</u> al fuoco (R1–2)	to bite off more than one can chew
	mettere il <u>carro</u> innanzi ai buoi	to put the cart before the horse
	avere/dare <u>carta</u> bianca	to have/to give a free hand/carte blanche
	a <u>casaccio</u> (R1)	haphazardly, at random
	cavallo di battaglia (R2–3)	pièce de résistance, strong point, forte
	avere una brutta <u>cera</u>	to look unwell
	essere al settimo <u>cielo</u>	to be in seventh heaven
	passarne/vederne di tutti i <u>colori</u>/ di cotte e di crude (R1–2)	to go through thick and thin
	dare il <u>colpo</u> di grazia a qu	to finish sb off
	dare un <u>colpo</u> al cerchio e uno alla botte	to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds
	fare <u>colpo</u> (su qu) (R1–2)	to make an impression (on sb)
	come se nulla fosse	as if nothing had happened
	fare il (porco [R1*–1])	to do as one pleases
	<u>comodo proprio</u> (R1–2)	
	essere in <u>condizioni</u> (di fare qc)	to be able (to do sth)
	fare i <u>conti</u> con qu (R1)	to settle accounts with sb
	avere un <u>conto</u> in sospeso con qu	to have an account to settle with sb

	Italian idiom	English equivalent
	andare <u>controcorrente</u>	to go against the current, to swim against the tide
	avere le <u>corna</u>; mettere le <u>corna</u> a qu (R1)	to be a cuckold; to be unfaithful to sb
	dire peste e <u>corna</u> di qu (R1)	to speak very badly of sb
	salvarsi in <u>corner</u> (R1)	to have a narrow escape
	tirare le <u>cuoia</u> (R1)	to kick the bucket
D	avere un <u>diavolo</u> per capello	to be furious
	mettere il <u>dito</u> sulla piaga (R1–2)	to touch on a sore point
	doccia scozzese (R2–3)	a succession of good and bad news
	dormire della grossa (R1–2)	to sleep like a log
F	avere la <u>faccia</u> tosta/di bronzo (R1)	to have cheek, to be brazen-faced
	avere <u>fegato</u>; avere il <u>fegato</u> di fare qc (R1–2)	to have guts; to have the guts to do sth
	essere ai <u>ferri corti</u>	to be at loggerheads
	toccare <u>ferro</u> (R1)/fare le corna (R1)/fare gli scongiuri	to touch wood NOTE fare le corna also indicates the insulting gesture accompanying the accusation of “cuckold”
	conciare per le <u>feste</u> (R1–2)	to reduce to a sorry state
	in <u>fila indiana</u>	in single file
	filarsela all’inglese (R2–3)	to take French leave
	dare del <u>filo</u> da torcere (a qu)	to make things hard (for sb)
	essere il <u>fior fiore</u> di qc (R2–3)	to be the cream of sth
	avere <u>fortuna</u> (R2)/culo (R1*), e.g.: che fortuna/culo (R1*)!	to be lucky what a fluke!
	fare un <u>freddo</u> cane (R1–2)	to be freezing cold (of weather)
	molto/tutto <u>fumo</u> e poco/niente arrosto (R1–2)	more appearance than substance, all appearance and no substance
	andare in <u>fumo</u>	to go up in smoke
	essere/trovarsi tra due <u>fuochi</u>	to be caught in the crossfire, be between two fires

	Italian idiom	English equivalent
	essere <u>fuori di sé</u>	to be beside oneself (usu negative)
	uscire/essere/andare <u>fuori dai gàngheri</u> (R1–2)	to lose one's temper
	fare il <u>furbo</u>, e.g.: non fate i furbi!	to try to be smart/clever don't you try to be smart!
G	fare una <u>gaffe</u> [gaf]	to put one's foot in it, to make a faux pas
	andare a letto con le <u>galline</u> (R1–2)	to go to bed very early
	una (brutta) <u>gatta da pelare</u> (R1–2)	a hard nut to crack
	(esserci) <u>quattro gatti</u> (R1) e.g.: c'erano <u>quattro gatti</u>	very few people (to attend) there were very few people
	in <u>gioco</u>/in ballo (R1–2)	at stake
	un <u>gioco da ragazzi</u> (fig)	a piece of cake (fig)
	prendere in <u>giro</u>/per i <u>fondelli</u> (R1–2)/per il culo (R1*) (qu)	to pull sb's leg, to make a fool of sb, to cheat sb
	la <u>goccia d'acqua che fa traboccare il vaso</u>	the straw that broke the camel's back, the last straw
	alzare il <u>gómito</u>	to drink (alcohol), to bend the elbow
I	essere/trovarsi tra l'<u>incùdine</u> e il martello	to be between the devil and the deep blue sea
L	spezzare una <u>lancia a favore di qu</u> (R3)	to plead sb's cause
	in <u>linea</u> d'aria	as the crow flies
	in <u>linea</u> di massima	generally speaking
	non avere una <u>lira</u> (R1–2)	not to have a bean/a penny/a cent
	dare alla <u>luce</u> (un bambino) (R2–3); vedere la <u>luce</u> (R3)/venire alla <u>luce</u> (R2–3)	to give birth; to be born, to be published
	a <u>lume</u> di naso (R1–2)	at a guess
M	allargarsi/espandersi a <u>macchia d'olio</u>	to spread quickly in all directions

Italian idiom	English equivalent
mandare qu a farsi friggere (R1)/ a farsi benedire (R1)/ al diavolo (R1*-1)/ a quel paese (R1)/ affanculo <i>(originally in central and Southern Italy for “a fare in culo,” very rude but very common expression)</i> (R1*)	to send sb packing; to tell sb to push off/to go jump in the lake/to go to hell/to get lost/to fuck off (all these are idiomatic and not literal translations of the Italian) NOTE: as direct insults, these expressions are used with andare , e.g.: va’ a farti friggere/a farti benedire/a quel paese (all R1*-1)/ affanculo (R1*) = push off/go jump in the lake/go to hell/get lost/fuck off
mangiare a quattro ganasce (R1)	to wolf down
un altro paio di <u>maniche</u> (R1-2)	another kettle of fish
essere in <u>maniche di camicia</u>	to be in one’s shirt-sleeves
lavarsene le <u>mani</u> (di qc)	to wash one’s hands of sth
mangiarsi le <u>mani</u> (per qc) (R1)	to regret (sth)
venire alle <u>mani</u> (R2-3)	to come to blows
dare una <u>mano</u> a qu (R1-2)	to give sb a hand
fuori <u>mano</u> (R1-2)	out of the way, far, remote (of places)
mettere una <u>mano</u> sul fuoco (R1-2)	to have total trust in sth/sb
fare <u>marcia indietro</u> (R1-2)	to go into reverse, (fig) to change one’s mind
da che <u>mondo</u> è mondo (R1-2)	since time began
saltare la <u>mosca</u> al naso (a qu) (R1-2), e.g.:	to get cross
gli è saltata la <u>mosca</u> al naso	he got cross
rompere (spaccare [R1*-1]) il <u>muso</u> (R1)/la <u>faccia</u> (R1) a qu	to smash sb’s face (in)

	Italian idiom	English equivalent
N	ficcare il <u>naso</u> (in qc) (R1)	to snoop around (in sth)
	non importare un bel nulla/fico secco (R1–2)/ cavolo (R1*–1)	not to matter two hoots/a damn
	non esserci anima viva/un'anima (R1–2)/ un cane (R1) e.g.:	there to be not a living soul
	non c'era anima viva	there was no one/not a living soul
	non sapere a che santo votarsi (R1–2)/ che pesci pigliare (prendere) (R1–2)	to be at one's wits' end, not to know where to turn, to be at a loss
	nuovo di zecca	brand new
	avere la testa tra le <u>nuvole</u>/vivere nelle <u>nuvole</u> (R1–2)	to have one's head in the clouds, to be up in the clouds, to be away with the fairies
	cascare dalle <u>nuvole</u>	to be astonished, to come back to earth
O	saltare agli <u>occhi</u> (R1–2)	to be patently obvious
	a <u>occhio</u> e croce (R1–2)	more or less, roughly
	chiudere un <u>occhio</u>	to turn a blind eye
	dare nell' <u>occhio</u> (a qu)	to be conspicuous, to attract the attention (of sb)
	in un batter d'<u>occhio</u>	in the twinkling of an eye
	non chiudere <u>occhio</u> (R1–2)	not to sleep a wink
	pagare/costare un <u>occhio</u> (della testa) (R1–2)	to pay through the nose/to cost an arm and a leg
	essere tutt'<u>orecchi</u>	to be all ears
	fare <u>orecchie da mercante</u>	to pretend not to hear
	essere bagnato fino all' <u>osso</u>/alle ossa (R1–2)	to be soaked to the skin
P	cadere dalla <u>padella</u> nella brace	to jump out of the frying pan into the fire
	dire <u>pane al pane</u> e vino al vino (R1–2)	to call a spade a spade
	parla come mangi! (R1)	speak simply and clearly!
	parlare del più e del meno	to chat about this and that
	parlare turco/arabo/ostrogoto (all R1)	to talk double-Dutch
	parlarsi addosso	to talk too much and for oneself

Italian idiom	English equivalent
essere di <u>parola</u>	to be reliable
prendere la <u>parola</u> (R2–3)	to take the floor
mangiarsi le <u>parole</u> (R1)	to speak indistinctly
fare quattro <u>passi</u> (R1–2)	to go for a stroll
essere <u>pazzo</u>/matto da legare (R1)	to be completely mad
non avere <u>pelì</u> sulla lingua (R1–2)	not to mince words
non stare più nella <u>pelle</u> (R1–2)	to be beside oneself (with joy or expectation)
avere la <u>pelle</u> d’oca; far venire la <u>pelle</u> d’oca a qu (R1)	to get goose pimples/bumps; to make sb get goose pimples/bumps
cercare il <u>pelo</u> nell’uovo per un <u>pelo</u> (R1), e.g.: (lui) ce l’ha fatta per un <u>pelo</u> per un <u>pelo</u> non è caduto	to be always picking holes in things just; nearly he made it by the skin of his teeth (affirmative) he very nearly fell down (negative)
perdere la bùssola/la tramontana/le staffe	to lose one’s temper
pagare di <u>persona</u>	to meet one’s responsibilities squarely
fare un <u>pesce</u> d’aprile a qu	to play an April’s Fool’s Day trick on sb
pezzo grosso (R1–2)	big shot, important person
scendere in <u>picchiata</u>	to dive (of a plane)
prendere due <u>piccioni</u> con una fava (R1–2)	to kill two birds with one stone
andare a <u>picco</u>; colare a <u>picco</u>	to sink (intr); to sink (both tr and intr)
non reggersi in <u>piedi</u>	to be weak, not to stand up (lit of people etc., fig of arguments etc.)
andare coi <u>piedi</u> di piombo (R1–2)	to watch one’s step, to proceed very carefully
indorare la <u>pìllola</u> (R2–3)	to sugar/gild the pill, to make sth easier to swallow
<u>piove</u> che Dio la manda (R1)/ <u>piove</u> a catinelle (R1–2)	it’s raining cats and dogs/buckets
essere il <u>pomo</u> della discordia	to be the bone of contention

	Italian idiom	English equivalent
	essere <u>poveri</u> in canna (R1-2)/ ridotti sul lastrico (R2-3)/ al verde (R1-2)/ in bolletta (R1-2)	to be broke
	mettere la <u>pulce</u> nell'orecchio a qu (R1-2)	to insinuate sth, to hint at sth
	mettere i <u>puntini</u> sulle/sugli i (R1-2)	to dot one's i's and cross one's t's
	di <u>punto</u> in bianco	out of the blue
	essere a un <u>punto</u> morto	to be at a standstill (of negotiations etc.)
	scatenare un <u>putiferio</u>/fare un casino (del diavolo/della madonna) (R1*)	to cause a row
Q	a <u>quattrocchi</u> (R1)	in private
R	dare <u>ragione</u>/torto a qu	to say that sb is right/wrong
	tirare i <u>remi</u> in barca	to back out of (some enterprise)
	mettere a <u>repentaglio</u> (R2-3)	to put in danger, to jeopardize
	rimangiarsi una promessa/la parola data	to go back on a promise/on one's word
	rispondere per le <u>rime</u> alla <u>rinfusa</u>	to answer back, to give tit for tat helter-skelter, higgledy-piggledy
	rompere le scatole (R1)/ le palle (R1*)/ i coglioni (R1*), OR simply rompere (R1*-1) (a qu)	to annoy, to pester sb
	mancare una <u>rotella</u> (a qu) (R1)	to have a screw loose
	uscire/passare/farcela per il <u>rotto della cuffia</u> (R1-2)	to get off/to squeeze through/to make it by the skin of one's teeth
S	fare <u>schifo</u> (a qu) (R1*-1)	to disgust (sb); to be awful; (fig) to be bad (at sth = in qc OR a qc [game, sport])
	scoprire l'acqua calda/l'America (both R1), e.g.: hai scoperto l'acqua calda!	to be clever (ironic or sarcastic) aren't you clever! (sarcastically)
	ritornare in <u>sé</u>	to regain consciousness, to come round
	prendere sul <u>serio</u>	to take seriously

	Italian idiom	English equivalent
	essere agli <u>sgoccioli</u> (R1–2)	to be at the very end/about to finish
	per/a <u>quattro soldi</u> (comprare/vendere) (R1–2)	for a song (to sell/to buy) (quattro soldi = very little money)
	esserci <u>sotto qualcosa</u> , e.g.: qui c'è sotto qualcosa	there to be sth fishy there's something fishy here
	essere (stare)/tenere sulle <u>spine</u>	to be/to keep on tenterhooks
	fare la <u>spola</u>/la navetta	to shuttle/go back and forth
	gettare la <u>spugna</u>	to throw in the towel/sponge
	chiudere la <u>stalla</u> quando sono scappati i buoi	to lock the stable door after the horse has gone/bolted
	non essere uno <u>stinco di santo</u> (R1)	to be no saint
	stare sullo <u>stomaco</u> (R1–2)/ sui <u>coglioni</u> (R1*)/ sul <u>cazzo</u> (R1*) a qu	to be utterly unbearable to sb
T	fare <u>tabula rasa</u> (R2–3)	to make a clean sweep
	bruciare le <u>tappe</u>	to go fast (also fig, e.g. in a career)
	col passare del <u>tempo</u>	as time goes/went by
	fare il bello e il cattivo <u>tempo</u> (R1–2)	to wield absolute power, to do as one pleases
	<u>tenere</u> a bada qu	to keep/hold sb in check/at bay
	tagliare la testa al <u>toro</u>	to cut things/the matter short
V	fare le <u>valigie</u> (fig R1–2)	to leave
	vedere tutto nero (R1–2)	to be pessimistic
	vedere tutto rosa (R1–2)	to see life/everything through rose-tinted glasses
	essere in <u>vena</u> (R1–2)	to be in the mood
	dare <u>via libera</u>	to give the green light
	avere sette <u>vite</u> (come un gatto)	to have nine lives (like a cat)
	avere <u>voce in capitolo</u> (R2–3)	to have a say (in the matter)
	volere la botte piena e la moglie ubriaca (R1–2)	to want to have one's cake and eat it
Z	darsi la <u>zappa</u> sui piedi (R1–2)	to damage/contradict oneself unwittingly; to shoot oneself in the foot

6.2 Similes based on adjectives

Sometimes a metaphor can take the place of a simile: **è un pezzo di pane** instead of **è buono come il pane**. In some cases (not listed) the metaphor is preferred, e.g. **è una lumaca** “s/he is (as slow as) a snail.”

For increased emphasis, the simile can be transformed into a comparative clause with **più . . . di/che . . .**, wherever indicated (cf. section 17.1).

Italian expression	English equivalent
bagnato come un pulcino (R1–2)	soaking wet
bello come il sole	dazzlingly handsome
bianco come la (più bianco della) neve	as white as (whiter than) snow
brutto come la fame/il demonio/la morte/il peccato (R1)	as ugly as sin
buono come il pane (R1–2)	“a living saint,” goodness itself
chiaro come il sole	as clear as day(light)/crystal
cieco come una talpa	as blind as a bat
contento come una pasqua (R1–2)	as happy as a lark
duro come il sasso/l'acciaio	as hard as a rock/as tough as nails
facile come bere un bicchier d'acqua	as easy as winking/ABC (of doing sth)
forte come (più forte di) un toro	as strong as an ox
freddo come la neve/il ghiaccio	as cold as ice
grande/grosso come una casa (R1–2)	huge
grasso come un maiale (R1)	as fat as a pig
liscio come l'olio	very flat (of water surface); (fig) as smooth(ly) as possible
muto come un pesce	close-mouthed, tight-lipped
nero come il carbone	as black as soot/pitch
raro come una mosca bianca (OR le mosche bianche)	extremely rare
sano come un pesce	as sound as a bell, as fit as a fiddle
solo come un cane	all alone
sordo come una campana	as deaf as a post
vecchio come il (più vecchio del) cucco (R1) (OR vecchio come [più vecchio di] Matusalemme)	as old as (older than) the hills/Methuselah
veloce come il vento	as swift as the wind

6.3 Similes based on verbs

Italian expression	English equivalent
bere come una spugna (R1–2)	to drink like a fish (usu alcohol)
cantare come un usignolo	to sing like a canary
dormire come un ghio	to sleep like a log
fumare come un turco (R1)	to smoke like a chimney
girare come una tróttola (also fig)	to spin like a top
mangiare come un lupo (R1–2)	to eat like a horse
mangiare come un maiale (R1)	to eat like a pig (i.e. with bad table manners)
nuotare come un pesce (R1–2)	to swim like a fish
parlare come un libro stampato (R1–2)	to talk like a book, to speak eloquently
piangere come una fontana (R1–2)	to cry buckets/floods of tears
piangere come una vite tagliata (R1–2)	to cry uncontrollably
tremare come una foglia (R1–2)	to tremble like a leaf

6.4 Other proverbial comparisons

Italian expression	English equivalent
capitare/essere come il cacio sui maccheroni (R1)	to be the right thing/person at the right time
è come parlare al muro/al vento (R1–2)	it's like talking to a brick wall/the wall
essere come cane e gatto (R1–2)	to be (always fighting) like cat and dog
essere come il diavolo e l'acqua santa (R1–2)	to be like cat and dog
essere come il vaso di coccio tra i vasi di ferro (R2–3)	to be in a risky situation, in the company of much rougher comrades
essere/fare come il bue che dice cornuto all'asino (R1)	to be/to do like the pot that calls the kettle black
essere/sentirsi come un pesce fuor d'acqua	to be/to feel like a fish out of water
peggio che andar di notte (R1–2)	worse than ever (of situations)
stare come un pascià (R1–2)	to be surrounded by comfort and luxury; to be in one's element

6.5 Proverbs

A great number of proverbs exist and are commonly used in Italian and in the Italian dialects. Their diffusion at all levels is such that in everyday use many of the following proverbs are simply “prompted,” that is, “suspended” after the first few words (e.g. **chi tardi arriva . . .**), on the assumption that the listener will be able to fill in the missing words (cf. English “where there’s a will . . .” and so on). Likewise, some of the components of these proverbs can be used separately though still preserving their proverbial meaning, e.g. **è acqua passata** (said of a past event that should not worry us anymore).

The following is only a small sample of the most common Italian proverbs. (See also chapter 10.)

A literal translation has been offered for those Italian proverbs without a more or less direct English equivalent. When no equivalent English proverb can be found, an explanation of the Italian saying is provided.

Italian proverb	English equivalent
Aiutati che il ciel/Dio t’aiuta	<i>God helps those who help themselves</i>
Batti il ferro finché è caldo	<i>Strike while the iron is hot</i>
A caval donato non si guarda in bocca	<i>Never look a gift horse in the mouth</i>
Chi dorme non piglia pesci	<i>lit S/he who sleeps does not catch fish, i.e. The early bird catches the worm</i>
L’abito non fa il monaco	<i>It’s not the cowl that makes the monk</i>
Meglio un/l’uovo oggi che una/la gallina domani	<i>lit Better an egg today than a hen tomorrow, i.e. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush</i>
Non si parla di corda in casa dell’impiccato	<i>Don’t speak of rope in the house of the hanged</i>
Occhio non vede cuore non duole	<i>lit Eye does not see, heart does not ache, i.e. Out of sight, out of mind</i>
Paese che vai usanza che trovi	<i>lit The town you go to, the customs you find, i.e. When in Rome, do as the Romans do</i>
Quando il gatto non c’è i topi ballano	<i>When the cat’s away, the mice will play</i>
Tra il dire e il fare c’è di mezzo il mare	<i>lit Between saying and doing there is the sea in the middle, i.e. Easier said than done</i>
Una rondine non fa primavera	<i>One swallow doesn’t make a summer</i>
A pagare e morire c’è sempre tempo	<i>lit There is always time to pay and to die i.e. Payments and death can always wait</i>
Chi ben comincia è a metà dell’opera	<i>Well begun is half done</i>
Chi cerca trova	<i>Seek and you shall find</i>
Chi non risica non rosica	<i>lit S/he who does not risk, does not gnaw, i.e. Nothing ventured, nothing gained</i>
Chi rompe paga (e i cocci sono suoi)	<i>lit S/he who breaks must pay (and the broken pieces are hers/his), i.e. He who’s guilty must pay</i>

Italian proverb	English equivalent
Chi tardi arriva male alloggia	<i>lit</i> S/he who is late will not find good lodgings, i.e. <i>First come first served</i>
Chi troppo vuole nulla stringe	<i>lit</i> S/he who wants too much gets nothing, i.e. <i>Grasp all lose all</i>
Chi va con lo zoppo impara a zoppiare	<i>lit</i> S/he who goes with the lame learns to limp, i.e. <i>Bad company will teach you bad things</i>
Chi va piano va sano e va lontano	<i>lit</i> S/he who goes slowly goes safely and far, i.e. <i>Slow and steady wins the race</i>
Finché c'è vita c'è speranza	<i>While there's life there's hope</i>
La gatta frettolosa fece i gattini ciechi	<i>lit</i> The hasty cat made blind kittens, i.e. <i>Acting in a hurry only leads to bad results</i> or <i>More haste less speed</i>
Mal comune mezzo gaudio	<i>lit</i> Shared evil, half joy, i.e. <i>A problem shared is a problem halved</i>
Meglio soli che male accompagnati	<i>Better alone than in bad company</i>
Meglio tardi che mai	<i>Better late than never</i>
Non tutto il male vien (OR non tutti i mali vengono) per nuocere	<i>lit</i> Not all evil comes to do harm, i.e. <i>Every cloud has a silver lining</i>
Troppi galli a cantar non fa mai giorno	<i>lit</i> (With) too many roosters the morning never comes, i.e. <i>Too many cooks spoil the broth</i>
Ride bene chi ride (l')ultimo	<i>He who laughs last laughs best</i>
Rosso di sera buon tempo si spera; rosso di mattina mal tempo s'avvicina	<i>Red sky at night shepherd's delight, red sky in the morning shepherd's warning</i>
Tra due litiganti il terzo gode	<i>lit</i> Between two quarreling parties it's the third that gains, i.e. <i>The onlooker gets the best</i>
Tutti i gusti sono gusti	<i>lit</i> All tastes are tastes, i.e. <i>There is no accounting for tastes</i>
Uomo avvisato mezzo salvato	<i>lit</i> A warned man is half saved, i.e. <i>Forewarned is forearmed</i>
Vale più la pratica che la grammatica	<i>lit</i> Practice is worth more than grammar, i.e. <i>Practice is better than theory</i>

7 Personal names

Apart from names of popes (e.g. John Paul II = **Giovanni Paolo II**), in modern/contemporary times, only the names of royalty tend to be translated into Italian. For instance, Queen Elizabeth, Prince Charles, Prince Philip, Princess Anne become, respectively, **la regina Elisabetta, il principe Carlo, il principe Filippo, la principessa Anna**. This “rule” does not seem to apply to anybody else, be they Presidents or Prime Ministers, famous or ordinary people. Consequently, Tony Blair, George Bush, or any Johnny Lambs will remain untranslated, rather than becoming Antonio Blair, Giorgio Bush or Gianni Lambs (not to mention Giorgio Cespuglio or Gianni Agnelli). The names of famous historical or literary characters of the past, on the other hand, have in many cases been Italianized, especially, but not only, first names (e.g. **Abramo Lincoln, Beniamino Franklin**). This trend has waned in recent times.

Latin names (personal as well as geographical) are usually Italianized. This “rule” applies to classical antiquity (all names, including Greek ones, had a Latin equivalent), and also, in more recent times, to a number of characters whose names were Latinized (e.g. Descartes > Cartesius > **Cartesio**), and to the popes (who always take Latin names).

In the following small samples – in which more obvious names, such as **Augusto**, have not been included – some of the unusual stresses have been indicated. In normal circumstances the usual Italian conventions with regard to written stresses will apply.

In some words, an accent is used to indicate the main stress but should not be used when writing. See p. 29.
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7.1 The ancient world: Greece and Rome

Achilles	Achille	Julius Caesar	Giulio Cesare
Aeneas	Enea	Juno	Giunone
Aeschylus	Eschilo	Jupiter/Jove	Giove
Aesop	Esòpo	Leto	Latona
Ajax	Aiace	Livy	Tito Livio
Alexander	Alessandro	Mark Antony	Marcantonio
Archimedes	Archimede	Nero	Nerone
Ariadne	Arianna	Oedipus	Edipo
Aristophanes	Aristofane	Ovid	Ovidio
Aristotle	Aristotele	Phidias	Fidia
Artemis	Artèmidè	Phoebus	Febo
Boethius	Boezio	Plato	Platone
Caligula	Caligola	Pompey	Pompeo
Cato	Catone	Praxiteles	Prassitele
Cicero	Cicerone	Pythagoras	Pitagora
Constantine	Costantino	Romulus	Romolo
Cyrus	Ciro	Scipio	Scipione
Diocletian	Diocleziano	Socrates	Socrate
Euclid	Euclide	Solon	Solone
Euripides	Euripide	Suetonius	Svetonio
Hannibal	Annibale	Sulla	Silla
Hector	Ettore	Terence	Terenzio
Hercules	Ercole	Venus	Venere
Homer	Omèro	Vergil/Virgil	Virgilio
Iliad	Iliade (f)	Xenophon	Senofonte
Odyssey	Odissèa	Xerxes	Serse
Horace	Orazio		

7.2 The Bible

7.2.1 Old Testament

Aaron	Aronne	Esau	Esau
Abel	Abele	Isaac	Isacco
Abraham	Abramo	Isaiah	Isaia
Adam	Adamo	Jacob	Giacobbe
Beelzebub	Belzebù	Jehovah	Gèova
Cain	Caino	Jeremiah	Geremia
David	Davide	Job	Giobbe
Delilah	Dàlila	Joshua	Giosuè
Elijah	Elia	Methuselah	Matusalemme

Moses	Mosè	Queen of Sheba	la Regina di Saba
Nebuchadnezzar	Nabucodonosòr	Samson	Sansone
Noah	Noè	Saul	Sàul

7.2.2 New Testament

Andrew	Andrèa	Mark	Marco
Bartholomew	Bartolomèo	Mary	Maria
Belshazzar	Baldassarre	Mary Magdalene	Maria Maddalena
Caiphas	Caifa	Matthew	Matteo
Herod	Erode	the Messiah	il Messia
James	Giàcomo	Pontius Pilate	Ponzio Pilato
Jesus Christ	Gesù Cristo	Satan	Sàtana
John (the Baptist)	Giovanni (Battista)	Saul (Paul)	Sàulo (Paolo)
Joseph	Giuseppe	Simon Peter	Simon Pietro
Judas	Giuda	the Wise Men	i Re Magi
Lazarus	Lazzaro	Zachaeus	Zaccheo
Luke	Luca	[NOTE: Gospel]	Vangelo]

NOTE: the feminine of **Andrea** is **Andreina**. Similarly, **Nicòla** (m = Nicholas) – **Nicoletta** (f). Also, the name “Simon” on its own is **Simone**.

7.3 The Middle Ages to the twentieth century

7.3.1 Non-Italian names

Francis/Roger	Francesco/Ruggero	Hamlet	Amleto
Bacon	Bacone	Magellan	Magellano
Charlemagne	Carlo Magno	Marie Antoinette	Maria Antonietta
Charles V	Carlo V (quinto)	Martin Luther	Martin Lutèro
René Descartes	Cartesio	Mary Stuart	Maria Stuarda
Don Quixote	Don Chisciotte	Mohammed	Maometto
Francis I	Francesco I (primo)	Napoleon	Napoleone
Franz Joseph	Francesco Giuseppe	Nicolas Copernicus	Nicòla Copernico
Henry VIII	Enrico VIII (ottavo)	Otto	Ottone
Joan of Arc	Giovanna d’Arco	Richard the	Riccardo Cuor di
John Calvin	Giovanni Calvino	Lionheart	Leone
John de Hawkwood	Giovanni Acuto	Romeo and Juliet	Giulietta e
John Lackland	Giovanni Senza Terra	Thomas More	Romèo
Louis	Luigi	Queen Victoria	Tommaso Moro
		William the	la regina Vittoria
		Conqueror	Guglielmo il Conquistatore

7.3.2 Italian names with a Latinized or Anglicized form in English

Aldus Manutius	Aldo Manuzio	Raphael	Raffaello
Christopher	Cristoforo	Thomas Aquinas	Tommaso
Columbus	Colombo		d'Aquino
Francis of Assisi	Francesco	Titian	Tiziano
	d'Assisi	Victor Emmanuel	Vittorio
Petrarch	Petrarca		Emanuele

8 Geographical and astronomical names and related adjectives

As with personal names, so with geographical names: the older the name (in the Latin or Italian tradition, that is), the more likely it is that it will have an Italianized version. This explains the great number of European locations in the following lists.

Each continent, country, region, and city has been complemented, whenever possible, by the adjective that, used as a noun, denotes the corresponding inhabitant. The adjectives that do not fulfil this function have been put in brackets. Any special form used in compound adjectives (e.g. **anglo-**) has also been given.

The geographical adjectives, even though the suffixes **-ese** and **-ano** characterize many of them, show a variety of endings, and in some cases appear quite removed from the name of the place they refer to. This is usually due to their deriving directly from older (mostly Latin or Latinized) geographical denominations, e.g. **londinese** < Lat. *londiniensem* < *Londinium* (London).

In everyday speech, if the particular adjective does not exist or is not known – some of those referring to less prominent places tend to be less commonly used – it is always possible to resort to the expression **di** (or **del/dello**/etc., according to the nature of the locality) + *name of the place*, e.g. **quella signora è di Aosta; quella signora è della Valle d'Aosta**.

Gender and number of regions and countries has been indicated only in difficult cases.

In the list of countries and regions of the world, the symbol † indicates that in normal circumstances that particular name should not be used with the definite article.

R1* vulgar or indecent

R1 informal,
colloquial

R2 neutral, unmarked

R3 formal, written
Italian words and
expressions are R2
unless otherwise
indicated. See also
p. 5.

The gender of nouns is
given only where it is
not predictable from the
principles given in
ch. 14.

In some words, an
accent is used to
indicate the main stress
but should not be used
when writing. See
29.

The usual Italian
pronunciation of foreign
words is given in
phonetic spelling in
square brackets
whenever appropriate.

8.1 Italy: administrative regions

Region	Adjective	Region	Adjective
Abruzzo	abruzzese, aprutino [R3]	Molise (m)	molisano
Basilicata (Lucania)	lucano	Piemonte (m)	piemontese
Calabria	calabrese (càlabro [R2–3] usu refers to ancient Calabria)	Puglia	pugliese (àpulo [R3] usu refers to ancient Apulia)
Campania	campano	Sardegna	sardo
Emilia	emiliano	Sicilia	siciliano (sìculo [R2–3] usu refers to ancient Sicily)
Romagna	romagnolo	Toscana	toscano, tósco (R3)
Friuli (m s)	friulano	Trentino	trentino
Venezia Giulia	giuliano	Alto Adige	altoatesino
Lazio	laziale (latino usu refers to ancient Latium)	Umbria	umbro
Liguria	lìgure	Valle d'Aosta	valdostano
Lombardia	lombardo	Veneto	veneto
Marche (f pl)	marchigiano		

NOTE: **laziale** is often used to indicate a supporter or a player of the Lazio football team. When talking about the region (or one of its inhabitants), it is less confusing to use the expression **del Lazio**.

8.2 Italy: cities

There follows a list of the capitals of all the provinces of Italy, their **sigle**, which are abbreviations used in car registration numbers (= **targhe** [**automobilistiche**]), addresses etc., and their corresponding adjectives.

NOTE that next to **romano**, **torinese**, **milanese** we also find the adjectives **romanista**, **torinista**, **milanista**, which are exclusively used in relation to the corresponding football teams **Roma**, **Torino** and **Milan**. Both sets of adjectives can be used as nouns, e.g. **un milanese** (= a (male) citizen of (or person born in) Milan), **un milanista** (= a (male) supporter of AC Milan).

The adjective **ambrosiano** (from **Ambrogio**, patron saint of Milan) is often used (in R2–3) as an alternative to **milanese**.

The English name of the Italian town (if any) is given in brackets.

Each of the two provinces of Massa–Carrara and Pesaro–Urbino has one *sigla*, respectively MS and PS, but two capitals. The corresponding adjectives have been given for both pairs.

City	Abbr.	Adjective	City	Abbr.	Adjective
Agrigento	AG	agrigentino	Enna	EN	ennese
Alessandria	AL	alessandrino			
Ancona	AN	anconetano, anconitano	Ferrara	FE	ferrarese
Aosta	AO	aostano	Firenze (Florence)	FI	fiorentino
Arezzo	AR	aretino	Foggia	FG	foggiano
Ascoli Piceno	AP	ascolano	Forlì	FO	forlivese
Asti	AT	astigiano	Frosinone	FR	frusinate
Avellino	AV	avellinese			
			Genova (Genoa)	GE	genovese
Bari	BA	barese	Gorizia	GO	goriziano
Belluno	BL	bellunese	Grosseto	GR	grossetano
Benevento	BN	beneventano			
Bèrgamo	BG	bergamasco	Imperia	IM	imperiese
Biella	BI	biellese	Isernia	IS	isernino
Bologna	BO	bolognese			
Bolzano	BZ	bolzanino, -ese	L'Aquila	AQ	aquilano
Brescia	BS	bresciano	La Spezia	SP	spezzino
Brindisi	BR	brindisino	Latina	LT	latinense
			Lecce	LE	leccese
Cagliari	CA	cagliaritano	Lecco	LC	lecchese
Caltanissetta	CL	nisseno	Livorno	LI	livornese
Campobasso	CB	campobassano	(Leghorn)		
Caserta	CE	casertano	Lodi	LO	lodigiano
Catania	CT	catanese	Lucca	LU	lucchese
Catanzaro	CZ	catanzarese			
Chieti	CH	teatino, chietino	Macerata	MC	maceratese
Como	CO	comasco, comacino (R3)	Mantova (Mantua)	MN	mantovano
Cosenza	CS	cosentino	Massa	MS	massese
Cremona	CR	cremonese	Carrara		carr(ar)ese
Crotone	KR	crotonese	Matera	MT	materano
Cùneo	CN	cunee(n)se			

City	Abbr.	Adjective	City	Abbr.	Adjective
Messina	ME	messinese	Rimini	RN	riminese
Milano (Milan)	MI	milanese	Roma	ROMA	romano
Modena	MO	modenese	Rovigo	RO	rodigino, rovigotto
Napoli (Naples)	NA	napoletano	Salerno	SA	salernitano
Novara	NO	novarese	Sassari	SS	sassarese
Nuoro	NU	nuorese	Savona	SV	savonese
Oristano	OR	oristanese	Siena	SI	senese
Padova (Padua)	PD	padovano	Siracusa	SR	siracusano
Palermo	PA	palermitano	Sondrio	SO	sondriese, sondriotto
Parma	PR	parmigiano, parmense	Tàranto	TA	tarantino
Pavia	PV	pavese	Tèramo	TE	teramano
Perugia	PG	perugino	Terni	TR	ternano
Pesaro	PS	pesarese	Torino	TO	torinese
Urbino		urbinate	Tràpani	TP	trapanese
Pescara	PE	pescarese	Trento (Trent)	TN	trentino
Piacenza	PC	piacentino	Treviso	TV	trevisano, trevigiano
Pisa	PI	pisano	Trieste	TS	triestino
Pistoia	PT	pistoiese	Udine	UD	udinese
Pordenone	PN	pordenonese	Varese	VA	varesino, varesotto
Potenza	PZ	potentino	Venezia (Venice)	VE	veneziano
Prato	PO	pratese	Verbania	VB	verbanese
Ragusa	RG	ragusano	Vercelli	VC	vercellese
Ravenna	RA	ravennate, ravegnano (less common)	Verona	VR	veronese
Reggio Calabria	RC	reggino	Vibo Valentia	VV	vibonese
Reggio Emilia	RE	reggiano	Vicenza	VI	vicentino
Rieti	RI	reatino, rietino	Viterbo	VT	viterbese

8.3 Continents

English name	Italian name	Italian adjective
Africa	Africa	africano, afro-
America	America	americano
North America	America del Nord, Nordamerica	nordamericano
South America	America del Sud, Sudamerica	sudamericano
Antarctica	Antàrtide (f)	(antàrtico)
Asia	Asia	asiatico
Europe	Europa	europeo, euro-
Oceania	Oceania	oceaniano (R3)

NOTE: **America** is often used (in R1–2) meaning **Stati Uniti**, and **americano** (in R2) meaning **statunitense**.

8.4 Europe: countries and regions

This table lists a number of European countries and regions that have an Italian name markedly different from the English, and/or an unusual adjective.

English name	Italian name	Italian adjective
Albania	Albania	albanese, albano-
Armenia	Armenia	armeno
Austria	Austria	austriaco, austro-
Bavaria	Baviera	bavarese
Belgium	Belgio	belga (pl. belgi/ belghe)
Bohemia	Boemia	boemo
Bulgaria	Bulgaria	bùlgaro
Burgundy	Borgogna	borgognone
Catalonia	Catalogna	catalano
Cornwall	Cornovaglia	(còrnico) (R3)

English name	Italian name	Italian adjective
Corsica	Corsica	còrso
Croatia	Croazia	croato
Cyprus	Cipro † (f)	cipriota
Czech Republic	Repubblica Ceca	ceco
Denmark	Danimarca	danese
Estonia	Estonia	èstone
Finland	Finlandia	finlandese, finnico (R2–3)
France	Francia	francese, franco-
Germany	Germania	tedesco
Great Britain	Gran Bretagna	britannico
England	Inghilterra	inglese, anglo-
Northern Ireland	Irlanda del Nord	nordirlandese
Scotland	Scozia	scozzese
Wales	Galles (m)	gallese
United Kingdom	Regno Unito (R2–3)	–
Greece	Grecia	greco
Greenland	Groenlandia	groenlandese
Holland	Olanda	olandese
Hungary	Ungheria	ungherese, ugro-
Ireland	Irlanda	irlandese
Iceland	Islanda	islandese
Italy	Italia	italiano, ìtalo-
Kosovo	Kosovo	co(s)ovaro
Lapland	Lapponia	làppone
Latvia	Lettonia	lèttone
Lithuania	Lituania	lituano
Luxembourg	Lussemburgo	lussemburghese
Macedonia	Macedonia	macèdone
Moldova	Moldavia	moldavo
Monaco	Montecarlo † (f)/ Principato di Mònaco	monegasco

English name	Italian name	Italian adjective
Montenegro	Montenegro	montenegrino
Norway	Norvegia	norvegese
Poland	Polonia	polacco
Portugal	Portogallo	portoghese
Provence	Provenza	provenzale
Rhodes	Rodi † (f)	rodio (R2–3), rodiense (R2–3), rodiese , ròdio (R3)
Romania	Romania	romeno , rumeno
Russia	Russia	russo
San Marino	San Marino † (f)	sanmarinese
Savoy	Savoia	savoiaro
Saxony	Sassonia	sassone
Scandinavia	Scandinavia	scandinàvo
Serbia	Serbia	serbo
Slovak Republic	Slovacchia	slovacco
Slovenia	Slovenia	sloveno
Soviet Union	Unione Sovietica	sovietico
Spain	Spagna	spagnolo , ispano-
Swabia	Svevia	svevo
Sweden	Svezia	svedese
Switzerland	Svizzera	svizzero
Turkey	Turchia	turco
Ukraine	Ucràina	ucràino
Vatican City	Città del Vaticano	(vaticano)

NOTE: the terms **Inghilterra/inglese** (and **anglo-**) are often used (R1–2) with the meanings of **Gran Bretagna/britannico**. Similarly, **Russia/russo** are often used with the meaning of **Unione Sovietica/sovietico**.

NOTE ALSO that, although rejected by purists, the pronunciation **scandinavo** is commonly used.

8.5 The Americas: countries and regions

Many South American countries have the same name in Italian as in English, and a corresponding adjective formed along the lines of **Colombia – colombiano**. They have not been included in this list.

English name	Italian name	Italian adjective
Argentina	Argentina	argentino
Brazil	Brasile (m)	brasiliano
Canada	Cànada/Canadà (m)	canadese
Chile	Cile (m)	cileno
Ecuador	Ecuador (m)	ecuadoriano
El Salvador	(El) Salvador (m)	salvadoregno (R2–3)
Guatemala	Guatemala (m)	guatemalteco (R2–3)
Honduras	Honduras (m)	honduregno (R2–3), honduriano
Mexico	Messico	messicano
Nicaragua	Nicaragua (m)	nicaraguegno (R2–3), nicaraguese
Panama	Panama † (f)	panamense
Peru	Perù (m)	peruviano
Puerto Rico	Portorico	portoricano
Tierra del Fuego	Terra del Fuoco	–
US(A)	Stati Uniti (d’America) (m pl), America (R1–2)	statunitense (R2–3), americano

NOTE: some of the States of the USA have a corresponding adjective in Italian: **californiano**, **texano**, **georgiano**, **hawaiano** [ava'jano/awa'jano].

8.6 Asia: countries and regions

This table lists some of the Asian countries that have an Italian name markedly different from the English, and/or an unusual adjective.

Due to the origin of the geographical names ending in *-stan* (= territory [of a certain people]) a similar pattern characterizes most

adjectives corresponding to regions ending in this way, e.g. **Afganistan** – **afgano**, **Usbechistan** – **usbeco**. A notable exception is **Pakistan** (whose formation is different), that gives the adjectives **pachistano**, **pakistano**.

English name	Italian name	Italian adjective
Afghanistan	Afganistan (m)	afgano
Burma	Birmania	birmano
Cambodia	Cambogia	cambogiano
China	Cina	cinese, sino-
Iraq	Iraq (m)	iracheno
Israel	Israele † (m)	israeliano
Japan	Giappone (m)	giapponese
Java	Giava †	giavanese
Jordan	Giordania	giordano
Laos	Laos (m)	laotiano (R2–3)
Lebanon	Libano	libanese
Malaya	Malesia	malese
Middle East	Medio Oriente	mediorientale
Mongolia	Mongolia	mòngolo
Palestine	Palestina	palestinese
Philippines	Filippine (f pl)	filippino
Saudi Arabia	Arabia Saudita	arabo, saudita, arabo-
Thailand	Tailandia	tailandese
Tibet	Tibet (m)	tibetano
Vietnam	Vietnam (m)	vietnamita
Yemen	Yemen (m)	yemenita

NOTE: **israelita** (= Israelite) is not used to indicate an inhabitant of modern Israel. Also: Hebrew, Jew = **ebreo** (n); Hebrew (adj) = **ebraico**; Jewish = **ebraico**, **ebreo** (less common).

8.7 Africa: countries and regions

This table lists some of the African countries and regions that have an Italian name markedly different from the English, and/or an unusual adjective. For a number of African countries that are not in the list, e.g.

Ghana, Niger etc., the corresponding adjectives don't exist or are not commonly used.

English name	Italian name	Italian adjective
Algeria	Algeria	algerino
Egypt	Egitto	egiziano
Ethiopia	Etiopia	etiope, (etiopico), etiopico-
Kenia	Kenia (m)	keniano, keniota
Libya	Libia	libico
Mauritania	Mauritania	mauritano
Morocco	Marocco	marocchino
Somalia	Somalia	sòmalò
South Africa	Sudafrica (m)/ Repubblica Sudafricana (R2–3)	sudafricano NOTE: Bushman = boscimano
Tunisia	Tunisia	tunisino

8.8 Oceania: countries and regions

For some of the States of Australia there are Italian versions, which have been included in the list next to the original English name. Apart from Tasmania, all the States and the Territory are masculine in Italian, when used in their English form.

NOTE that even though **Galles** (=Wales) is masculine on its own, the Italian version of New South Wales is sometimes feminine (**la Nuova Galles del Sud**).

English name	Italian name	Italian adjective
New Zealand	Nuova Zelanda	neozelandese
New Guinea	Nuova Guinea	–
Western Australia	Western Australia, Australia Occidentale	westaustraliano [westaustra'ljano]
South Australia	South Australia, Australia Meridionale	sudaustaliano

English name	Italian name	Italian adjective
New South Wales	New South Wales, Nuovo/-a Galles del Sud	–
Northern Territory	Northern Territory, Territorio del Nord	–
Victoria	Victoria (m)	– NOTE: vittoriano usu refers to Queen Victoria

8.9 Historical or mythical places

English name	Italian name	Italian adjective
Aix-la-Chapelle	Aquisgrana	–
Alexandria	Alessandria (d'Egitto)	alessandrino
Antioch	Antiochia	antiocheno (R3)
Atlantis	Atlàntide (f)	– NOTE: atlantico refers to the Atlantic Ocean
Bethlehem	Betlemme	–
Byzantium	Bisanzio	bizantino
Carthage	Cartàgine	cartaginese, (pùnico)
Constantinople	Costantinopoli	–
Corinth	Corinto	corinzio
Damascus	Damasco	damasceno (R3), damaschino
Galilee	Galilea	galileo
Gaul	Gallia	gallo, (gàllico)
Iberia	Iberia	ibèro, (ibèrico), ibero-
Judaea	Giudea	giudeo, (giudàico)

English name	Italian name	Italian adjective
Nazareth	Nazaret	nazareno
Smyrna	Smirne	smirnèo (R3, ancient times), smirniota (R3, modern times)
Thrace	Tracia	tracio
Troy	Troia	troiano NOTE: 'Trojan horse' is translated cavallo di Troia (NOT cavallo troiano)

8.10 Cities of the world

English name	Italian name	Italian adjective
Adelaide	Adelaide [ade'laide]	–
Algiers	Algeri	algerino
Antwerp	Anversa	–
Athens	Atene	ateniese
Baltimore	Baltimora	–
Barcelona	Barcellona	–
Belgrade	Belgrado	belgradese
Berlin	berlino	berlinese
Bern	Berna	bernese
Cadiz	Càdice	gaditano (R3)
Cairo	Il Cairo	cairota (m pl -i , f pl -e) (R3)
Cape Town	Città del Capo	–
Cologne	Colonia	–
Dublin	Dublino	dublinese
Edinburgh	Edimburgo	–
Frankfurt	Francoforte	–

English name	Italian name	Italian adjective
Geneva	Ginevra	ginevrino
Gibraltar	Gibilterra	–
Hamburg	Amburgo	amburghese
Havana	L'Avana	avanese
Krakow	Cracovia	cracoviano
Liege	Liegi	–
Lisbon	Lisbona	lisbonese
London	Londra	londinese
Lyon	Lione	lionese
Madrid	Madrid	madrileno
Marseille	Marsiglia	marsigliese
Mexico City	Città del Messico	–
Moscow	Mosca	moscovita
Munich	Mònaco (di Baviera)	monacense (R3)
New York	New York [nju'jɔrk] (less frequently Nuova York)	newyorkese [njujɔr'keze], nuovaiorchese /– kese
Nice	Nizza	nizzardo NOTE: the inhabitants of Nizza Monferrato (Piemonte) are called nicesi or nizzesi
Nuremberg	Norimberga	–
Paris	Parigi	parigino
Peking/Beijing	Pechino	pechinese
Philadelphia	Filadelfia	filadelfiese (R2–3)
Piraeus	Il Pireo	–
Prague	Praga	praghese
Salzburg	Salisburgo	salisburghese
São Paulo	San Paolo	–
Seville	Siviglia	sivigliano
Sophia	Sòfia	–

English name	Italian name	Italian adjective
St Petersburg	San Pietroburgo	–
Stockholm	Stoccolma	–
Strasbourg	Strasburgo	–
The Hague	L'Aia	–
Tunis	Tunisi	tunisino
Vienna	Vienna	viennese
Zaragoza	Saragozza	–

8.11 Rivers of the world

The rivers in this table are masculine unless otherwise stated (cf. section 14.3).

Amazon	Rio delle Amàzzoni	Rhone	Ròdano
Danube	Danubio	Seine	Senna (f)
Euphrates	Eufrate	St. Lawrence	San Lorenzo
Ganges	Gange	Tagus	Tago
Indus	Indo	Thames	Tamigi
Loire	Loira (f)	Tiber	Tévere
Nile	Nilo	Tigris	Tigri
Rhine	Reno	Yellow River	Fiume Giallo

NOTE the adjectives **tiberino**, for the **Tevere**, and **padano**, for the **Po** river.

8.12 Mountains and volcanoes of the world

Alps	le Alpi	Matterhorn	il (monte) Cervino
Apennines	gli Appennini	Mont Blanc	il Monte Bianco
Appalachians	gli Appalacchi	Pyrenees	i Pirenei
Carpathians	i Carpazi	Rocky Mountains	le Montagne
Caucasus	il Càucaso		Rocciose
Himalayas	l'Himalàia (m)	Urals	gli Urali
Kilimanjaro	il Kilimangiaro	Vesuvius	il Vesuvio

8.13 Planets, stars, and constellations

With the exception of **la Terra**, the planets are masculine.

Earth	Terra	Leo	Leone (m)
Jupiter	Giove	Libra	Bilancia
Mars	Marte	Pisces	Pesci (m pl)
Mercury	Mercurio	Sagittarius	Sagittario
Neptune	Nettuno	Scorpio	Scorpione (m)
Pluto	Plutone	Taurus	Toro
Saturn	Saturno	Virgo	Vergine (f)
Uranus	Urano	Pole Star, North Star	Stella Polare
Venus	Venere	Southern Cross	Croce del Sud
Aquarius	Acquario	Ursa Major, Big Bear, Big Dipper (US)	Orsa Maggiore, Gran Carro
Aries	Ariete (m)		
Cancer	Cancro		
Capricorn	Capricorno	Ursa Minor, Little Bear, Little Dipper (US)	Orsa Minore, Piccolo Carro
Gemini	Gemelli (m pl)		

9 Abbreviations and acronyms

The abbreviations and acronyms in use in Italian are many and ever changing. The following conventions apply generally in Italian.

For all measurements (metric, scientific etc.) the abbreviations used in Italian follow international conventions.

Words are usually truncated after a consonant or cluster of consonants, e.g. **part.**(*icipio*) **pass.**(*ato*). Days and months, on the other hand, are often found abbreviated after their third letter, e.g. **gio** for **giovedì**, **ago** for **agosto**. A shortened form is sometimes followed by the last letters of the word, e.g. **Gent.mo** for **Gentilissimo**.

In acronyms, the plural is sometimes indicated in writing by doubling the initial letter, e.g. **AA VV** for **Autori vari**; in some truncated words, the last letter (consonant) may be found repeated, e.g. **pagg.** for **pagine** as opposed to **pag.** for **pagina**.

The shortening of words is mainly a writing expedient and truncated words are mostly read in their full form: **Sig.** is always read “**signor(e)**.”

Acronyms, on the other hand, are pronounced and can be written as normal nouns whenever possible, e.g. **UFO**, which is read “ufo” and can be found written **Ufo** or **ufo**. In some cases, however, a letter by letter reading is unavoidable, e.g. **BBC**, pronounced “bi-bi-ci”. There are also some “hybrid” forms, such as **CGIL** (a trade union), pronounced “ci-gi-elle,” with “gi” incorporating “i,” or **RAI TV**, pronounced “rai ti-vù.” Note that among the acronyms we can count also those word-like abbreviations obtained by using more than just the first letter of the words of the full denomination, e.g. **(la/una) colf** for **collaboratrice familiare**; **(la) Cariplo** [ˈkariplo], for **Cassa di Risparmio delle Provincie Lombarde**. Other forms of common word-like abbreviations are obtained by contracting the (two) most meaningful words of the full name into one word, e.g. **(la) Confindustria** [konfinˈdustɾja], for **Confederazione Generale dell’Industria Italiana**.

In most cases acronyms take articles: definite, in the case of specific objects or organizations (e.g. **la NATO**, **la BBC**, **il DNA**); definite or indefinite in the other cases (e.g. **l’/un UFO**, **il/un CD**).

Acronyms usually maintain gender and number of the head noun of the full Italian expression, e.g.:

la Fabbrica Italiana Automobili Torino > la FIAT.

Among the very few exceptions we can count **UPIM**, usu feminine in spite of its original, but all-but-forgotten meaning, **Unico Prezzo Italiano di Milano**.

For foreign acronyms, gender and number are usually those of the corresponding Italian expression, e.g.:

“organization” = *organizzazione* (f s) > **la** **FAO**, **la** **NATO**;

“States” = *Stati* (m pl) > **gli** **USA**

The “word-like” acronyms that may be used in the plural tend to remain invariable, e.g. **un** **Ufo**, **dieci** **Ufo**.

Tables of common Italian abbreviations and acronyms

The following tables contain a small sample of the abbreviations and acronyms commonly used in Italian. Please note the following.

The acronyms with a ‘spelling-like’ pronunciation, e.g. **BBC**, are preceded by an asterisk * (for the pronunciation of letters see section 12.2.2).

‘Word-like’ acronyms, e.g. **UFO**, are preceded by the symbol °. Their pronunciation is given in the form of Italian words (to be read according to Italian pronunciation conventions), in italics and within square brackets, in the second column of each table.

All the other abbreviations are pronounced in their full form, as indicated in the second column of each table.

9.1 Titles and other frequently used abbreviations

Note that, although they may be reported in lower case, all the abbreviated titles are very often used with a capital letter, e.g. **Sig.ra**, instead of **sig.ra**, as a (further) sign of respect.

There is no Italian equivalent of *Ms* (cf 14.2).

Abbreviation		Italian meaning, pronunciation	English counterpart
* A . . .	f	Autostrada (+ <i>number</i>), e.g. A 25 , pronounced <i>a venticinque</i>	M (UK), Motorway, Freeway
a.C.		avanti Cristo	BC (Before Christ)
AA. VV.		Autori vari	(by) various authors
* AIDS	f	Sindrome di Immunodeficienza Acquisita [<i>aidiesse</i> or <i>àids</i>]	AIDS
° avv.		avvocato (+ <i>name</i>)	lawyer
° BOT	m	Buono (Ordinario) del Tesoro [usu pl <i>i bot</i>]	Treasury bond
c.a.		corrente anno	current year

Abbreviation		Italian meaning, pronunciation	English counterpart
° C.A.P.	m	Codice di Avviamento Postale [<i>cap</i>] NOTE: in addresses, the C.A.P. is written before the city, e.g. sig. Bianchi, via Verdi 8, 00100 Roma	Post/Zip Code
c.d.d.; c.v.d.		come dovevasi dimostrare; come volevasi dimostrare	Q.E.D.
c.m.		corrente mese	current month, inst.
C.P.		Casella Postale	PO Box
c.so		corso	(main street, boulevard)
c/c		conto corrente	current/cheque/check (US) account
c/o		presso	c/o
ca.		circa	c., ca.
cap.		capitolo	ch., chapter
* CD (ROM)	m	Compact disc [<i>ci di (rom)</i>]	CD (ROM)
cfr.		(Lat. <i>confer</i>) confronta	cf.
° colf	f	collaboratrice familiare [<i>colf</i>]	housemaid
d.C.		dopo Cristo	AD (NOTE: AD <i>year</i> = <i>year</i> d.C., e.g. AD 79 = 79 d.C.)
* DNA	m	acido deossiribonucleico	DNA
° DOC		Denominazione d'Origine Controllata [<i>doc</i> , adj, e.g. vino doc = <i>vino a denominazione di origine controllata</i>]	Wine denomination and origin certified
dott./ dott.ssa		dottor/dottoressa (+ <i>name</i>)	title given to anyone with a university degree
E		est	E (East)
ecc.		eccetera	etc.
Egr.		egregio	distinguished (in letters, addresses)
es.; p. es.		esempio; per esempio	ex., example; e.g.
et al.		(Lat. <i>et alii</i>) e altri	et al.
F.lli		Fratelli (+ <i>name</i>)	Bros.
G.U.		Gazzetta Ufficiale	Official Government Bulletin

Abbreviation		Italian meaning, pronunciation	English counterpart
ibid.		ibidem	ibid.
id.		idem	id.
Ill.mo		Illustrissimo	most illustrious (in formal letters and addresses)
ing.		ingegner (+ <i>name</i>)	engineer (used as title)
° IVA	f	Imposta sul Valore Aggiunto [<i>iva</i>]	VAT, Value Added Tax (= approx. GST, Goods and Services Tax)
* k.o.		fuori combattimento	K.O., knock(ed) out
l.go		largo	type of “piazza”
loc. cit.		(Lat. <i>loco citato</i>) al passo citato	loc. cit.
N		nord	N (North)
N.B.		Nota Bene	(please) note, NB
N.d.A.		nota dell’autore	author’s note
N.d.R.		nota del redattore	editor’s note
N.d.T.		nota del traduttore	translator’s note
ND		nobil donna	M(r)s . . . (in mail addresses)
NH		nobil uomo	Mr . . . (in mail addresses)
* NN		padre ignoto/genitori ignoti (only in the locution figlio/-a di NN)	
N°; n.		numero	No., number
NS		Nostro Signore	Our Lord
ns.		nostro/-a	our(s) (usu = our letter)
O (<i>also W</i>)		ovest	W (West)
op. cit.		(Lat., <i>opere citato</i>), opera citata	op. cit.
p. es.		per esempio	e.g., for example
p., pag.; pp., pagg.		pagina; pagine	p., pp.; page, pages
p.c.		per conoscenza	c.c., cc. (carbon copy), copy to
P.I.L.	m	prodotto interno lordo	GNP
* P.S.	m	postscriptum, poscritto	P.S., postscript
p.v.; pv/		prossimo venturo	prox., next (month)

Abbreviation	Italian meaning, pronunciation	English counterpart
p.za	piazza	Sq.
R.I.P.	riposi(no) in pace	R.I.P.
racc.	raccomandata	registered mail (letter)
rag.	ragionier (+ <i>name</i>)	accountant, book keeper (title)
s., seg.; ss.	segunte; seguenti	f.; ff. (following)
s.; S.	san, santo, sant', santa	St.
S.A.R.	Sua Altezza Reale	H.R.H.
s.l.m.	sul livello del mare	above sea level
* S.p.A.	Società per Azioni	joint-stock company
* S.r.l.	Società a responsabilità limitata	Ltd., limited liability company
S.S.	Strada Statale	National Road
S.S.	Sua Santità	H.H., His Holiness
s.v.	(Lat. <i>sub voce</i>) sotto la voce	reference in dictionaries; s.v.
S.V; SS.VV	Signoria Vostra; Signorie Vostre	formal "you" (s and pl)
sc.	(Lat. <i>scilicet</i>), vale a dire	viz., sc.
sig.	signor (+ <i>name</i>)	Mr
sig.na	signorina (+ <i>name</i>)	Miss
sig.ra	signora (+ <i>name</i>)	Mrs
Soc.	Società	Company NOTE: ". . . & Co." corresponds to Italian . . . e C. [<i>e compagni</i>].
Spett.	spettabile	dear, lit respectable (in letters and addresses)
SS.	Santissimo	Most Holy
ss., SS.	santi/sante	SS, Saints
T	Tabaccheria	Tobacconist (shop sign)
° TAC	f Tomografia Assiale Computerizzata [<i>tac</i>]	CAT scan
tel.	telefono	tel., ph.
u.s.	ultimo scorso	ult., last (month)
v.	vedi	see; v.
v.le	viale	Av(e).; Blvd.
vs.	vostro/-a	your(s), (<i>usu</i> = your letter)

9.2 International organizations

	Abbreviation		Italian meaning, pronunciation	English counterpart
*	BBC	f	Ente Britannico di Radiodiffusione	BBC
	BCE		Banca Centrale Europea	ECB
	CD		Corpo Diplomatico	CD
◦	CEE	f	Comunità Economica Europea [<i>cèe</i>]	EEC
◦	CIA	f	Agenzia Centrale d'Informazione [<i>cia</i>]	CIA
	CIO		Comitato Olimpico Internazionale	IOC
*	FBI	m	Ufficio Federale Investigativo [pronounced (<i>l'</i>) <i>effebiaì</i>]	FBI
◦	FIFA	f	Federazione Internazionale del Calcio [<i>fifa</i>]	FIFA
	FMI	m	Fondo Monetario Internazionale	IMF
*	IBM	f	Società Internazionale Macchine per Uffici	IBM
◦	NATO	f	Organizzazione del Trattato Nord Atlantico [<i>nato</i>]	NATO
*	OLP	f	Organizzazione per la Liberazione della Palestina	PLO
	OMS		Organizzazione Mondiale della Sanità	WHO
◦	ONU	f	Organizzazione delle Nazioni Unite [<i>onu</i>]	UNO
◦	OPEC	f	Organizzazione dei Paesi esportatori di petrolio [<i>òpec</i>]	OPEC
◦	RAF	f	Aviazione militare inglese [<i>raf</i>]	RAF
◦	SME	m	Sistema Monetario Europeo [<i>lo sme</i>]	EMS
	UE		Unione Europea	EU
	UEM		Unione Economica e Monetaria	EMU
◦	URSS		Unione delle Repubbliche Socialiste Sovietiche [usu <i>l'Unione Sovietica</i> , or <i>la Russia</i> (R1–2), but also <i>l'urs</i>]	USSR
◦	USA	m	Stati Uniti (d'America) [<i>gli usa</i>]	USA
*	WWF	m	Fondo Mondiale per la Natura [pron. <i>vu vu èffè</i>]	WWF

9.3 Italian non-political organizations

Some of the organizations mentioned in this list are today in a state of flux. Changes in the ownership of part or all of their corporate structures may affect their denomination and, in some cases, their existence.

Some non-official political organizations have been included in this list rather than the next one.

Abbreviation		Italian meaning, pronunciation	Explanatory notes
◦ ACLI	f	Associazioni Cattoliche dei Lavoratori Italiani [<i>le acli</i>]	Italian Workers' Catholic Associations
◦ AGIP	f	Azienda Generale Italiana Petroli [<i>agip</i>]	State oil company
A.I.		Aeronautica Italiana	Italian Air Force
◦ ANAS	f	Azienda Nazionale Autonoma delle Strade [<i>anas</i>]	National roads board
* B.R.		Brigate rosse [<i>le bierre</i>]	Red Brigades (terrorists)
◦ CARIPLO	f	Cassa Risparmio Provincie Lombarde [<i>càriplo</i>]	(Bank)
CC		Carabinieri	(Military police)
◦ CEI	f	Conferenza Episcopale Italiana [<i>cei</i>]	Italian bishops' Conference
* CL		Comunione e Liberazione [(no article) <i>ci-èlle, i ci-ellini</i>]	(Catholic movement)
* CNR	m	Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche	National research council
◦ CONI	m	Comitato Olimpico Nazionale Italiano [<i>coni</i>]	Italian national Olympic committee
CRI	f	Croce Rossa Italiana	Italian Red Cross
E.I.		Esercito Italiano	Italian Army
◦ ENEL	m/f	Ente Nazionale Energia Elettrica [<i>enel</i>]	State electric company
◦ ENI	m/f	Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi [<i>eni</i>]	State company for hydrocarbons
FF. AA.		Forze Armate	Armed forces
FF. SS.		Ferrovie dello Stato	Italian railways
FI . . .		Federazione Italiana . . .	Italian federation . . . (<i>appears in many acronyms</i>)

Abbreviation		Italian meaning, pronunciation	Explanatory notes
◦ FIAT	f	Fabbrica Italiana Automobili Torino [<i>fiat</i>]	FIAT
FIGC		Federazione Italiana Gioco Calcio	Italian football federation
G.d.F.		Guardia di Finanza	Finance police
◦ IRI	m/f	Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale [<i>iri</i>]	(The “umbrella” for state-owned companies)
◦ ISTAT	m	Istituto Centrale di Statistica [<i>istat</i>]	Central institute for statistics
M.M.		Marina Militare	Italian Navy
* P.S.	f	Pubblica Sicurezza	Police
◦ RAI (TV)	f	Radio-televisione Italiana [<i>rai (ti (v)vù)</i>]	State television company
◦ STANDA	f	Società Tutti Articoli Nazionali dell’Arredamento e Abbigliamento [<i>standa</i>]	(Chain of department stores)
◦ UPIM	f	Unico Prezzo Italiano di Milano	(Chain of department stores)
VV. UU.	m	Vigili Urbani	Municipal traffic police

9.4 Italian official political organizations, unions etc.

In the last fifty years, the fertile world of Italian politics, with its characteristically “hot” climate, has been particularly favorable to the sprouting of a great variety of parties and organizations. Many of them are often referred to in their abbreviated form, not only in writing, but also in speech. Of these, the following table lists the most frequently mentioned, including some that, although politically extinct or existing under different denominations, are still linguistically alive. It should be borne in mind that the winds of change of the last few years may well keep blowing into the immediate future.

Abbreviation		Italian meaning, pronunciation	Explanatory notes
* AN	f	Alleanza Nazionale [<i>aenne</i> (no article)]	National Alliance
* CCD	m	Centro Cristiano Democratico [<i>il cicidi, i democratici di centro</i>]	Christian Democratic Center
* CDU	m	Cristiani Democratici Uniti [<i>il cidiù</i>]	Christian Democrats United

Abbreviation		Italian meaning, pronunciation	Explanatory notes
* CGIL	f	Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro [<i>la cìgi-èlle</i>]	(Trade union)
◦ CISL	f	Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori [<i>la cìsl</i>]	(Trade union)
* DC	f	Democrazia Cristiana [<i>la diccì, i democristiani</i>]	Christian Democrats (extinct)
* DS		Democratici di sinistra [<i>diesse</i> (no article)]	Left Democrats
◦ MSI	m	Movimento Sociale Italiano [<i>il mis, i missini</i>]	(Extreme right-wing party now extinct)
* PCI	m	Partito Comunista Italiano [<i>il piccì, i comunisti</i>]	Communist Party (extinct)
◦ PLI	m	Partito Liberale Italiano [<i>il pli, i liberali</i>]	Liberal Party
* PPI	m	Partito Popolare Italiano [<i>il pippi-ì, i popolari</i>]	Italian Popular Party
PR		Partito Radicale [or <i>i radicali</i>]	Radical Party
◦ PRI	m	Partito Repubblicano Italiano [<i>il pri, i repubblicani</i>]	Republican Party
◦ PSDI	m	Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano [<i>il psdi</i> (note the article), <i>i socialdemocratici</i>]	Socialist Democratic Party (extinct)
◦ PSI	m	Partito Socialista Italiano [<i>il psi</i> (note the article), <i>i socialisti</i>]	Socialist Party (extinct as PSI , resurrected as PS [<i>partito socialista</i>])
◦ PSIUP	m	Partito Socialista Italiano di Unità Popolare [<i>il psiùp, i psiuppini</i> (note the articles)]	Socialist Party of Popular Unity (extinct)
* UDR	f	Unione Democratica per la Repubblica [<i>l'udierre</i>]	Democratic Union for the Republic
◦ UIL	f	Unione Italiana del Lavoro [<i>la uil</i>]	(Trade union)

Some of the more frequently used Italian abbreviations are formed by creating new words out of two from the full name. In many cases, the first of the words involved is **confederazione**, which gives **conf-**, followed by the word that defines the organization. The resulting abbreviations are all pronounced and used as regular feminine nouns. The associations in this

list are generally representing the employers/owners/lessors in various fields of the economy.

Abbreviation	Italian meaning	Explanatory notes
Coldiretti	Confederazione nazionale coltivatori diretti	National Small Farmers' Federation
Confagricoltura	Confederazione Generale dell'Agricoltura Italiana	Italian Farmers' Association
Confapi	Confederazione Generale della Piccola Industria	Italian Small Manufacturers' Federation
Confartigianato	Confederazione Generale dell'Artigianato Italiano	Italian Artisans' Federation
Confcommercio	Confederazione Generale del Commercio	Italian Traders' Federation
Confedilizia	Confederazione Italiana della Proprietà Edilizia	Italian House Owners' Federation
Confindustria	Confederazione Generale dell'Industria Italiana	Italian Manufacturers' Federation

10 Latin expressions and sayings

Some of the most common Latin expressions in use in today's Italian are listed in the following tables. (See also section 9.1 for Latin abbreviations.)

NOTE that, in the Italian tradition, Latin is pronounced according to the rules of modern Italian, except for the diphthongs “ae” and “oe,” read [ɛ] – e.g. *ex aequo* [ɛgʒ'ɛkwo/ɛks'ɛkwo] – and the group “ti” followed by vowel, which is pronounced [tsj] – e.g. *a fortiori*, [a for'tsjɔri]. In particular, “h” is always silent – e.g. *ad hoc* [ad ɔk] – and “j” is pronounced [j] – e.g. *Juventus* [ju'ventus].

10.1 Latin expressions

For some of these expressions the boundary between Latin and Italian is somewhat blurred, at least in most speakers' perception. In a case like **nota bene**, the argument in favour of an Italian reading is quite strong (to the point that this expression has not been included here as Latin); in others, such as **grosso modo**, the confusion arises from their widespread use and the existence of similar Italian words.

The following expressions are used as adjectives and/or adverbs, unless otherwise indicated. An English explanation of the Italian use of each expression has been given. A common Italian alternative has also been provided whenever available.

The symbol # indicates a similar use of the same expression in English, whereas the exclamation mark ! warns that there are differences between Italian and English in their use of the same (or similar) Latin expression.

	Latin	Register	Italian	English
#	a fortiori	R3	a maggior ragione	<i>even more so</i>
#	a posteriori	R3	basato/basandosi sull'esperienza; dopo il fatto	<i>based on experience; after the event; with the benefit of hindsight</i>
#!	a priori		(R3) basato/basandosi sulla ragione; prima del fatto BUT usu (R2) = senza dati di fatto	<i>based on reason (not experience); before the event; without the support of facts</i>
#!	ad hoc	R2–3	(fatto) apposta/per l'occasione	<i>for the purpose</i>
#	ad libitum	R3	a piacere	<i>at will</i>
#!	alter ego	R2–3	(m) sostituto perfetto	<i>another self</i>
	cum grano salis	R3	con discernimento	<i>with a grain of salt</i>
#!	deus ex machina	R2–3	(m) <i>a person whose intervention resolves an intricate situation</i>	
	ex abrupto	R3	all'improvviso	<i>suddenly</i>
	ex aequo	R2	a pari merito, alla pari, e.g. secondi ex aequo	<i>equals</i>
#	ex cathedra	R3	<i>said of authoritative statements, esp by the pope in matter of faith, e.g. parlare ex cathedra</i>	
	ex novo	R2–3	da capo	<i>all over again</i>
	ex voto	R2–3	(m) <i>said of objects donated to churches "per grazia ricevuta," often in fulfilment of a vow</i>	
#	gratis (et amore Dei)		gratuito, gratuitamente	<i>free of charge</i>
	grosso modo		all'incirca, più o meno	<i>roughly, more or less</i>
!	in extremis		all'ultimo momento e.g. salvarsi in extremis	<i>at the last minute</i> NOTE the difference from the English use (= in an extreme case)
	in nuce	R3	in sostanza	<i>in substance</i>
#!	interim	R3	(m) <i>this term describes the period of vacancy of a particular office, as well as the appointment to temporarily fill it (accettare l'interim degli Interni = to accept a temporary appointment as Minister of Internal Affairs)</i>	

	Latin	Register	Italian	English
!	ipso facto	R3	subito, immediatamente	<i>immediately</i>
	lapis		(m) matita	<i>pencil</i>
	lapsus		(m) sbaglio, distrazione	<i>slip (of the pen/tongue)</i>
	mea culpa	R2–3	(m) ammissione di colpa; e.g. fare (il) mea culpa	<i>acknowledgment of one's faults;</i> “to acknowledge one's faults”
#	modus vivendi	R2–3	(m) accomodamento	<i>arrangement</i>
	mutatis mutandis	R2–3	fatti i dovuti cambiamenti	<i>with the necessary changes</i>
	non plus ultra		(m) (il) massimo; e.g. è il non plus ultra	<i>the top, the best, the “ne plus ultra”</i>
#	persona non grata	R3	(f) persona non gradita	<i>unwanted person</i>
	pro bono pacis		per quieto vivere	<i>for the sake of peace</i>
!	quiproquo	R2–3	(m) equivoco	<i>misunderstanding</i> NOTE the difference from quid pro quo (not used in Italian)
	rara avis	R3	(f) <i>said of person (or thing) that's exceptional for some good quality</i>	
!	sine qua non	R2–3	imprescindibile; e.g. una condizione sine qua non	<i>essential</i> NOTE: used as a noun in English
!	statu quo (ante)	R2–3	(m) situazione di fatto	<i>status quo</i>
	ultra [ul'tra] (through French)		(n inv) estremista (<i>usu in politics or sport</i>)	<i>extremist (politics); fanatical supporter (sport)</i>
	Via Crucis		(f) la Via della Croce; (fig) calvario	<i>Way of the Cross;</i> <i>(fig) calvary</i>
#	viceversa		(adv) all'inverso (conj.) e invece	<i>the opposite way and instead</i>

10.2 Latin proverbs and mottoes

A number of Latin sayings are quite common, in Italian, at the higher registers.

beati monoculi in regno/terra caecorum	R3	In the land of the blind, happy those who have one eye
carpe diem		seize the day
de gustibus non disputandum	R2–3	don't argue about tastes
divide et impera	R2–3	divide and rule
errare humanum est (perseverare diabolicum)	R2–3	to err is human (to persevere in error is diabolical)
excusatio non petita accusatio manifesta	R3	an unsolicited apology is an obvious self-accusation
gutta cavat lapidem	R3	the droplet hollows out the stone
homo homini lupus	R2–3	man is wolf to his fellow man
in vino veritas		in wine (there is) truth
mens sana in corpore sano	R2–3	a sound mind in a sound body
risus abundat in ore stultorum	R3	laughter abounds in the mouths of fools
(scripta manent) verba volant	R3	(written words stay,) spoken words fly
summum ius, summa iniuria	R3	the more law, the more injustice
talis pater talis filius	R2–3	like father like son

11 Grammatical terms

11.1 Grammatical terms (termini grammaticali)

The following is a list of common grammatical terms.

Categories shared by adjectives and pronouns (e.g. **possessivo**) have only been listed once, under **aggettivo**.

fonologia	phonology
morfologia	morphology
sintassi	syntax

accento (tònico)	stress
accento (grafico)	stress mark
tonico (adj)	stressed (syllable)
àtono (adj)	unstressed (syllable)
parola tronca	word stressed on last syllable (e.g. città)
parola piana	word stressed on second-last syllable (e.g. ballétto)
parola sdrùcciola	word stressed on third-last syllable (e.g. màccchina)
parola bisdrùcciola	word stressed on fourth-last syllable (e.g. telèfonano)
parola trisdrùcciola	word stressed on fifth-last syllable (e.g. recàpitamelo)

The gender of nouns is given only where it is not predictable from the principles given in ch. 14.

In some words, an accent is used to indicate the main stress but should not be used when writing. See p. 29.

sillaba	syllable
consonante (f)	consonant
vocale (f)	vowel
dittongo	diphthong
soggetto	subject
complemento oggetto	direct object
oggetto diretto	direct object
oggetto indiretto	indirect object
suffisso	suffix
accrescitivo (adj)	augmentative
diminutivo (adj)	diminutive
vezzeggiativo (adj)	of endearment
peggiorativo (adj)	pejorative
verbo	verb
transitivo (adj)	transitive
intransitivo (adj)	intransitive
riflessivo (adj)	reflexive
diàtesi	voice
attivo (adj)	active
passivo (adj)	passive
modo	mood
finito (adj)	finite
indicativo	indicative
congiuntivo	subjunctive
condizionale (m)	conditional
imperativo	imperative
indefinito (adj)	non-finite
infinito	infinitive
participio	participle
gerundio	gerund
tempo	tense
semplice (adj)	simple
presente	present (e.g. amo etc.; ami etc.)
futuro	future (e.g. amerò etc.)
imperfetto	imperfect (e.g. amavo etc.; amassi etc.)
passato remoto	simple past, past definite (e.g. amai etc.)
composto (adj)	compound
passato prossimo	present perfect, usu not translated (e.g. ho amato etc.)
futuro anteriore	future perfect (e.g. avrò amato etc.)

trapassato prossimo	pluperfect, past perfect (e.g. avevo amato etc.)
trapassato remoto	pluperfect, past perfect/anterior (e.g. ebbi amato etc.)
congiuntivo passato	past/perfect subjunctive (e.g. abbia amato etc.)
congiuntivo trapassato	pluperfect subjunctive (e.g. avessi amato etc.)
condizionale passato	past conditional (e.g. avrei amato etc.)
persona	person

11.2 Punctuation marks (Segni di punteggiatura)

The symbol @ in e-mail addresses is called **chiòcciola** (lit *snail*).

The symbol # (hash) is called **cancelletto** (lit *little gate*).

The symbol & (ampersand) is not common in Italian, but is called ‘**e commerciale**’.

NOTE that **punto e virgola** is masculine as a whole: **un/il punto e virgola**.

Italian	mark	English
accento acuto	´	acute accent (on closed e [e] and o [o])
accento grave	`	grave accent (on a , i , u and on open e [ɛ] and o [ɔ])
apòstrofo	’	apostrophe
asterisco	*	asterisk
due punti	:	colon
lineetta	—	dash (also used to separate direct speech)
parentesi (f inv) parentesi tonde parentesi quadre parentesi graffe	() [] { }	bracket round brackets square brackets double brackets, curly brackets
puntini di sospensione puntini puntini (R1–2)	. . .	suspension marks, dot dot dot
punto	.	full stop, period (US); point (numbers); dot (e-mail)

Italian	mark	English
punto e virgola	;	semicolon
punto esclamativo	!	exclamation mark
punto interrogativo	?	question mark
sbarra/barra inversa	\	back slash
sbarretta	/	slash
trattino	-	hyphen
virgola	,	comma
virgolette (basse)	« »	quotation marks (used for direct speech)
virgolette (alte)	“ ”	inverted commas (generally used to isolate and/or highlight one or more words; tra virgolette = in inverted commas)
virgolette singole	‘ ’	single inverted commas (used as the double inverted commas, but less frequently)

11.3 Other common terms and expressions

Italian	mark	English
(lettera) maiùscola		capital letter
(lettera) minùscola		small letter
in neretto, in grassetto		bold
in corsivo		italic
corsivo		italics
paràgrafo	§	paragraph (= subheading)
capoverso		beginning of a paragraph, paragraph (in a text)
a capo		new paragraph
andare a capo		to start a new paragraph

12 Numerals and telephone conventions

12.1 Numerals and mathematical conventions

12.1.1 Decimals

In Italian, as a rule, the **punto** (point) separates thousands, the **virgola** (comma) decimals, e.g. 1.000.000 = **un milione**; 23,42 = **ventitré virgola quarantadue/ventitré e quarantadue (centesimi)**. NOTE that the English reading *twenty-three point four two* has no direct equivalent in Italian (**ventitré virgola quattro due** is not used). However, it should be pointed out that the use of the decimal point, if not practiced, is certainly widely understood in Italy, especially in the scientific world.

For the sake of clarity, the Anglo-American conventions (i.e. decimal point) have been applied throughout this text, even in Italian contexts.

12.1.2 Mathematical operations

When doing operations, the following Italian expressions are worthy of notice:

- in sums (**addizioni**), in everyday casual speech “plus” can be simply **e**, and “equals” is omitted, e.g. $2 + 3 = 5$ **due e tre cinque** (R1–2), rather than **due più tre è uguale a** (R2–3)/**fa cinque**. Cf. the idiom **in quattro e quattr’otto** (“in the twinkling of an eye”).
- in divisions (**divisioni**), “divided by” becomes **diviso**, e.g. $8 : 2 = 4$ **otto diviso due è uguale a** (R2–3)/**fa quattro**
- in ratios (**proporzioni**), English “is to” becomes Italian **sta a**, e.g. $4 : 6 = 6 : 9$ **quattro sta a sei come sei sta a nove**
- in raising to a power (**elevazione a potenza**), “squared” is translated **al quadrato**, “cubed” **al cubo**, and, generally, “to the nth power” becomes **all’ennesima (potenza)**, e.g. 3^3 **tre al cubo/alla terza (potenza)**

12.1.3 Ordinal numbers

The usual notation is [Arabic numeral]^o, which is acceptable also for the feminine and the plural, where strictly speaking ^{a/i/e} should be used. It is nonetheless advisable to use the agreement, esp in the singular, e.g. **Carlo**

fa la 4^a (classe) elementare (“Carlo is in 4th grade”). As an alternative to the Arabic notation, in some cases Italian can simply use the corresponding Roman numeral (without ^{o/a/i/e} and usu after the noun), e.g. **Carlo fa la IV elementare**. This is common practice with kings, queens, popes, emperors, e.g. **Luigi XIV** (*quattordicesimo*), and often centuries; e.g. **il secolo XIV** (or **il 14^o secolo**) = the fourteenth century.

Following the French, some of the kings Louis of France are sometimes mentioned (in R3) with a cardinal, rather than ordinal, number, e.g. *Luigi tredici/quattordici/quindici/sedici*.

12.2 Telephone conventions

12.2.1 Telephone numbers

In recent years, area codes have become, in Italy, an integral part of telephone numbers and must always be dialed including the initial zero, even when ringing from abroad. Verbally, the area code is often given digit by digit, whereas the numbers that follow are said in pairs or one by one (with pauses after every three/two digits). One way of reading the number **06 9876543** could therefore be **zero sei; nove otto sette, sessantacinque** (or **sei cinque, quarantatré** (or **quattro tre**).

12.2.2 Telephone alphabet

In order to avoid confusion, when spelling names or words, especially but not only on the telephone, a conventional “telephone alphabet” is used. Every Italian letter is assigned the name of a town or city. The non-Italian letters (j, k, w, x, y) have one foreign word each, though in most cases their distinctive names are clear enough.

The ‘telephone’ alphabet can be used to:

- specify a letter, e.g. **A come Ancona** (cf. English ‘A for/as in apple’)
- spell a word, e.g. **Padova, Empoli, Roma, Torino, Hotel** spells “**Perth**.”

With the exception of **k** (usu m, possibly to avoid confusion with **cappa** (f = cloak; hood [in fireplaces etc.]), the letters of the alphabet are usu considered feminine (see chapter 14 “Gender”).

	Italian		British	American
A	a	Ancona	Andrew	Abel
B	bi	Bologna	Benjamin	Baker
C	ci	Como	Charlie	Charlie
D	di	Domodossola	David	Dog
E	e	Empoli	Edward	Easy
F	effe	Firenze	Frederick	Fox

	Italian		British	American
G	gi	Genova	George	George
H	acca	Hotel	Harry	How
I	i	Imola	Isaac	Item
J	i lunga	Jersey	Jack	Jig
K	cappa	Kursaal	King	King
L	elle	Livorno	Lucy	Love
M	emme	Milano	Mary	Mike
N	enne	Napoli	Nellie	Nan
O	o	Otranto	Oliver	Oboe
P	pi	Padova	Peter	Peter
Q	cu	Quarto	Queenie	Queen
R	erre	Roma	Robert	Roger
S	esse	Savona	Sugar	Sugar
T	ti	Torino	Tommy	Tare
U	u	Udine	Uncle	Uncle
V	vi/vu	Venezia	Victor	Victor
W	vu doppia/doppia vu (<i>less common vi doppia/doppia vi</i>) In acronyms, w is pron vu , e.g. BMW [bi emme vu]; www [vu vu vu]	Washington	William	William
X	ics	xeres	Xmas	X
Y	i greca or ipsilon	yacht or York	Yellow	Yoke
Z	zeta ['dzeta]	Zara	Zebra	Zebra

13 Measurement

The metric system is universally used in Italy. With the notable exception of the internationally adopted **miglio marino/nautico** (*nautical mile*) and the **nodo** (*knot* = 1 nautical mile an hour), the existence of Italian translations for most imperial (or American) terms (such as **pòlice** for “inch”) does not necessarily entail knowledge of the corresponding value by the native Italian speaker. In order to avoid confusion, it is therefore advisable, when translating imperial or American measurements from English, to turn them into or give an indication of their metric equivalents. The following tables of conversion include both precise and rounded-up values. While the first set might of course be necessary in some circumstances (e.g. in the fields of science and technology), in most everyday situations the approximate equivalences will be quite adequate. A measurement of “4 in.” will therefore be translated into (**circa**) **10 centimetri** (rather than *10,156 centimetri*), and so on.

All words ending in **-grammo** are stressed on the second-last syllable (e.g. **centigràmmo**), whereas all the words with **-metro** and **-litro** are stressed on the third-last syllable (e.g. **centìmetro**, **centìlitro**), although it is not uncommon to hear **millilitro** instead of **millilitro**. Note that the prefix *kilo-* is often spelt **chilo-** in Italian, even though the letter *k* is regularly used in the abbreviations.

For the sake of simplicity, the numbers have been written according to Anglo-American conventions.

In some words, an accent is used to indicate the main stress but should not be used when writing. See p. 29.
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13.1 Length (Lunghezza)

Standard conversion table		
1 inch	un pollice = 2.539 cm	1 cm = 0.3937 in
1 foot	un piede = 30.480 cm	
1 yard	una iarda = 91.440 cm	1 m = 3.2808 ft
1 fathom	un braccio = 1.8288 m	1 m = 1.093 yd
1 mile	un miglio terrestre = 1.6093 km	1 km = 0.6214 mi
1 nautical mile	un miglio marino = 1.853 km	
1 league	una lega = 5.559 km	

Approximate equivalences		
10 cm	≈	4 in
50 cm	≈	1½ ft
1 m	≈	1 yd (3 ft)
100 m	≈	100 yds
10 km	≈	6 miles
100 km	≈	60 miles

Examples

Height	una bambina di/alta novanta centimetri = a child 3 feet tall un uomo di/alto un metro e ottanta = a man 6 feet tall una montagna alta 4000 metri = a mountain 13,000 feet high
Speed	cento chilometri all'ora = 60 miles an hour

Expressions of length, width, height, depth, thickness

lunghezza	questo ponte ha una lunghezza di tre chilometri (R2–3) questo ponte è di tre chilometri (di lunghezza); è un ponte di tre chilometri (di lunghezza) questo ponte è lungo tre chilometri; è un ponte lungo tre chilometri questo ponte è tre chilometri (R1)
larghezza	questa strada ha una larghezza di dieci metri (R2–3) questa strada è di dieci metri di larghezza; è una strada di dieci metri di larghezza questa strada è larga dieci metri; è una strada larga dieci metri

altezza quest'albero ha un'altezza di sei metri (R2-3)
 quest'albero è di sei metri (di altezza); è un albero di sei metri
 quest'albero è alto sei metri; è un albero alto sei metri
 NOTE: l'aereo è a mille metri di altezza/altitudine (R2-3);
 l'aereo è a un'altezza (R1-2)/ una quota/un'altitudine
 (R2-3) di mille metri

profondità questo lago ha una profondità di venti metri (R2-3)
 questo lago è profondo venti metri; è un lago profondo venti
 metri
 NOTE; qui l'acqua è alta (R1-2)/profonda (R2-3) tre metri
 qui la neve è alta un metro/qui c'è un metro di neve

spessore questa tavola ha uno spessore di tre centimetri
 questa tavola è di tre centimetri di spessore; è una tavola di tre
 centimetri di spessore
 questa tavola è spessa tre centimetri; è una tavola spessa tre
 centimetri

NOTE: in all the above expressions, the specifications **di lunghezza, di larghezza, di altezza, di spessore** can be left out when contextually obvious.

13.2 Weight (Peso)

The units **chilogrammo** (kg) and **ettogrammo** (hg) are very common in everyday life and are usually shortened, respectively, to **chilo** and **etto** (pl **chili, etti**), e.g. **mi dà due etti e mezzo di prosciutto, per piacere?** ("could you please give me 250g [half a pound] of Parma ham?"). As regards heavier weights, the **quintale** (q = 100 kg) is very popular, even though with a recent ruling the EU has "outlawed" such use in official contexts, in favour of the **tonnellata** (t = 1000 kg)

Standard conversion table (Avoirdupois)

1 oz	un'oncia	= 28.349 g	1 g = 0.03527 oz
1 lb	una libbra	= 453.592 g	
1 stone		= 6.3507 kg	1 kg = 2.20462 lbs
1 cwt (UK)		= 50.802 kg	
1 cwt (US)		= 45.359 kg	1 t = 0.9842 tons
1 ton	una tonnellata inglese	= 1016.047 kg	1 t = 1.1023 tn.sh
1 short ton	una tonnellata americana	= 907.185 kg	(1 metric ton/1 tonne)

Approximate equivalences	
100 g (un etto)	$\approx 4 \text{ oz}$
$\frac{1}{4} \text{ kg}$ 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ hg (due etti e mezzo) 250 g	$\left. \vphantom{\begin{matrix} \frac{1}{4} \text{ kg} \\ 2 \frac{1}{2} \text{ hg} \\ 250 \text{ g} \end{matrix}} \right\} \approx \frac{1}{2} \text{ lb}$
$\frac{1}{2} \text{ kg}$	$\approx 1 \text{ lb}$
1 kg	$\approx 2 \text{ lb}$
6 kg	$\approx 1 \text{ stone}$
100 kg (un quintale)	$\approx 16 \text{ stones; } 220 \text{ lb}$

Examples

un etto di burro = 4 oz of butter
una donna di sessanta chili = a 10-stone woman
un uomo di un quintale = a 16-stone man; a 220-pound man

13.3 Area (Area or superficie [f R2–3])

Standard conversion table		
1 sq in	un pollice quadrato = 6.45159 cm^2	$1 \text{ cm}^2 = 0.1550 \text{ sq in}$
1 sq ft	un piede quadrato = 929.028 cm^2	
1 sq yd	una iarda quadrata = 0.8361 m^2	$1 \text{ m}^2 = 10.7639 \text{ sq ft}$
1 sq mile	un miglio quadrato = 2.59 km^2 259 ha	$1 \text{ km}^2 = 0.3861 \text{ sq miles}$
1 acre	un acro = 4046.8 m^2 = 0.40468 ha	$10,000 \text{ m}^2 = 1 \text{ ha} = 2.4711 \text{ acres}$ (un ettaro)

Approximate equivalences	
$6 \text{ cm}^2 \approx 1 \text{ sq in}$	$1 \text{ ha (un ettaro)} \approx 2 \frac{1}{2} \text{ acres}$
$1 \text{ m}^2 \approx 1 \text{ sq yd}$	$50 \text{ ha} \approx 125 \text{ acres}$
$1,000 \text{ m}^2 \approx \frac{1}{4} \text{ acre}$	$250 \text{ ha (} = 2 \frac{1}{2} \text{ km}^2 \text{)} \approx 1 \text{ sq mile}$

Examples

un’azienda agricola di quaranta ettari = a 100-acre farm
100 ettari (= 1 km^2) di foresta = 250 acres of forest

13.4 Volume (Volume [m])

Standard conversion table		
1 cubic inch	un pollice cubico/cubo = 16.387 cm ³	1 m ³ = 35.314 cu ft (un metro cubo)
1 cubic foot	un piede cubico/cubo = 0.02832 m ³	
1 cubic yard	una iarda cubica/cuba = 0.76455 m ³	

13.5 Capacity (liquid) (Capacità)

Standard conversion table		
1 gill	(UK) = 0.142051 (US) = 0.11831	1 l = 1.7598 pt (UK) (un litro) = 2.1134 pt (US)
1 pint	una pinta (UK) = 0.568231 (US) = 0.47321	
1 quart	un quarto (UK) = 1.136461 (US) = 0.94641	
1 imperial gallon	un gallone inglese (UK) = 4.545961	
1 gallon	un gallone americano (US) = 3.78531	
1 barrel	un barile (UK) = 1.6365 h1 (US) = 1.1922 h1	

Approximate equivalences	
1 litro ≈ 2 pints	24 litri ≈ 5 gallons (UK)
4 litri ≈ 1 gallon	24 litri ≈ 6 gallons (US)

Examples

la mia macchina fa (più di) 17 chilometri con un litro (R1–2)	my car does 50 (miles) to the gallon (UK)/40 (miles) to the gallon (US)
9 chilometri con un litro (R1–2) mezzo litro di birra	25 to the gallon (UK)/21 to the gallon (US) a pint of beer

13.6 Currency (Valùta or moneta corrente)

From the unification of Italy until 2002, the Italian currency was the **lira** (£ or **LIT**). The use of **centèsimi** (= *cents*, lit *hundredths*) disappeared after the Second World War with inflation. At the beginning of 2002 the lira and 11 other European currencies were replaced by the **euro** [euro] (m inv). Euros come in coins of (**monete da**) 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50 cents (**centesimi**) and 1 and 2 euros (**euro**), as well as notes of (**banconote/biglietti da**) 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, 500 euro. Officially, 1 **euro** is worth 1936.27 old **lire**: when switching from the old currency to the new, a factor of 2000 therefore gives a good approximation, e.g.: 5 **centesimi** ≈ 100 **lire**; 10 **euro** ≈ 20 000 **lire**; 500 **euro** ≈ 1 million **lire**.

13.7 Temperature (Temperatura)

Conversion formulae and tables (**gradi centigradi/Celsius (R3) – gradi Fahrenheit**):

$^{\circ}\text{F} = \frac{9}{5}^{\circ}\text{C} + 32$ $^{\circ}\text{C} = \frac{5}{9}(^{\circ}\text{F} - 32)$

General		Body temperature																																																																								
<table><tr><th>°F</th><th>°C</th></tr><tr><td>−4</td><td>−20</td></tr><tr><td>0</td><td>−17.8</td></tr><tr><td>5</td><td>−15</td></tr><tr><td>14</td><td>−10</td></tr><tr><td>23</td><td>−5</td></tr><tr><td>32</td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>41</td><td>5</td></tr><tr><td>50</td><td>10</td></tr><tr><td>59</td><td>15</td></tr><tr><td>68</td><td>20</td></tr><tr><td>77</td><td>25</td></tr></table>	°F	°C	−4	−20	0	−17.8	5	−15	14	−10	23	−5	32	0	41	5	50	10	59	15	68	20	77	25	<table><tr><th>°F</th><th>°C</th></tr><tr><td>86</td><td>30</td></tr><tr><td>95</td><td>35</td></tr><tr><td>104</td><td>40</td></tr><tr><td>113</td><td>45</td></tr><tr><td>122</td><td>50</td></tr><tr><td>131</td><td>55</td></tr><tr><td>140</td><td>60</td></tr><tr><td>158</td><td>70</td></tr><tr><td>176</td><td>80</td></tr><tr><td>194</td><td>90</td></tr><tr><td>212</td><td>100</td></tr></table>	°F	°C	86	30	95	35	104	40	113	45	122	50	131	55	140	60	158	70	176	80	194	90	212	100	<table><tr><th>°F</th><th>°C</th></tr><tr><td>105.8</td><td>41.0</td></tr><tr><td>104.9</td><td>40.5</td></tr><tr><td>104.0</td><td>40.0</td></tr><tr><td>103.1</td><td>39.5</td></tr><tr><td>102.2</td><td>39.0</td></tr><tr><td>101.3</td><td>38.5</td></tr><tr><td>100.4</td><td>38.0</td></tr><tr><td>99.5</td><td>37.5</td></tr><tr><td>98.6</td><td>37.0</td></tr><tr><td>97.7</td><td>36.5</td></tr><tr><td>96.8</td><td>36.0</td></tr></table>	°F	°C	105.8	41.0	104.9	40.5	104.0	40.0	103.1	39.5	102.2	39.0	101.3	38.5	100.4	38.0	99.5	37.5	98.6	37.0	97.7	36.5	96.8	36.0
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13.8 Time (Tempo)

The 24-hour system is used for official business (timetables, television programmes etc.). Similarly, the use of **quindici, trenta, quarantacinque, cinquanta, cinquantacinque** (implying **minuti**) instead of, respectively, **un quarto, mezzo/mezza** (R 1–2), **tre quarti/meno un quarto, meno dieci, meno cinque** smacks of bureaucratic officialdom. In everyday informal speech the twelve-hour system is used, if necessary with the specifications **di/della mattina** or **del mattino** (usu 2am–11am), **di/del pomeriggio** (usu 2pm–6pm), **di/della sera** (usu 5pm–11pm), **di/della notte** (usu 1am–2am). The use of these specifications may vary according to the season: for instance, the **pomeriggio** tends to be longer in the summer. “Midday” (12pm) is **mezzogiorno**, “midnight” (12am) is **mezzanotte**.

THE CLAUSE – combining words

14 Gender

All Italian nouns are either masculine or feminine.

14.1 Gender and sex

14.1.1 Persons

Nouns referring to persons of the male sex tend to be masculine, nouns referring to persons of the female sex tend to be feminine. There are, however, a number of exceptions. It should be remembered that agreement of adjectives and past participles with nouns is generally based on grammatical gender, not natural sex.

Masculine nouns with possible female referents

Most are job titles for which a feminine form is not in use. They are nouns relating to:

- professions, e.g. **medico** *doctor*, **ingegnere** *engineer*, **falegname** *carpenter*
- positions or ranks within an organization or a team, e.g. **consigliere** *board member*, **sergente** *sergeant*, **portiere** *goalkeeper*

NOTE also

- **soprano**, **mezzosoprano**, **contralto**, which in the singular are sometimes used in the feminine (**la soprano** etc.) when referring to actual female singers rather than to voice ranges.

Feminine nouns with possible male referents

Notable among the most common are:

- **guardia** *guard*, **sentinella** *sentry*, **recluta** *recruit*, **vittima** *victim*, **guida** *guide*, **spia** *spy*, **canaglia** *rascal*

In some words, an accent is used to indicate the main stress but should not be used when writing. See p. 29.

NOTE that in uncertain or (potentially) mixed contexts, masculine is the “default” gender in Italian, e.g.:

- **Quanti figli hai?** *How many children/boys do you have?*
- **Quanti fratelli ha Carlo?** *How many siblings/brothers does Carlo have?*

Ambiguity can be avoided by for example referring to **figli maschi** as opposed to **figlie femmine** in the first instance, to **fratelli e sorelle** in the second.

14.1.2 Animals (see also ‘Noises of animals’ in chapter 3)

The great majority of animals are commonly referred to by using a “default” term. This applies, in both singular and plural, when the sex of the animal is not an issue or is unknown, especially when there are no obvious differences between the male and the female of the species. These nouns can be masculine, e.g. **gatto, cane, topo, elefante, leopardo**, or feminine, e.g. **volpe, lepre** (usu f), **balena, pecora, pantera**.

NOTE the possible differences between Italian and English where, in R1, a cat may be sometimes generically referred to as a “she”, and a fox or a hare as a “he.”

It is also possible to specify the sex of an animal. Often there are distinct masculine and feminine forms to indicate the male and the female of the species (see section 14.2). If no specific form exists, the generic term denoting the animal may be followed, in R2–3, by “**maschio**” or “**femmina**,” which in this case are invariable. The grammatical gender of the whole expression is that of the original term, e.g. **un rinoceronte maschio/femmina, molti rinoceronti maschio/femmina; una volpe maschio/femmina, molte volpi maschio/femmina**. In scientific contexts (R3) it is also possible to refer to ‘the male/female of the particular species’, e.g. **il maschio/la femmina del rinoceronte**. In some cases a suffix may allow, in R1, to specify the sex of certain animals, e.g. **scoiattolino/scoiattolina**.

14.2 Formation of masculine/feminine pairs

Nouns referring to people or animals often have different forms to distinguish between males and females. Some pairs of nouns are quite unrelated in form, but in most cases the only difference between the masculine and their feminine counterpart is in the ending, with some characteristic patterns of correspondence.

Due to the ever increasing presence of women at all levels in society, including fields that have traditionally been the exclusive domain of men, the issue of gender in language has acquired sociopolitical implications. In linguistic terms, this has led to some confusion in the use of titles related to jobs, professions, positions, ranks, etc. With most professions and

positions, the tendency is to leave the title in the masculine, especially in formal contexts, e.g. **Lia Bo, Professore di Fisica Nucleare**, or **l'Ambasciatore d'Italia, signora Bo**, etc. A female minister in government may be **la ministra** or **il ministro**, but the latter is much more common. In some cases, beside a grammatically feminine form, an analytic expression has been coined, e.g. **donna poliziotto** (beside **poliziotta**), **donna pilota** (beside **pilota f**). The feminine of some titles can also traditionally mean “wife of the title holder” (cf English “queen”), e.g. **ambasciatrice** or **presidentessa**, and/or might have joking or mocking connotations, e.g. **sindachessa, medichessa**.

Adjectives and participles tend to agree with the natural sex of the person if the person is named, regardless of any other words referring to the person (cf. section 16.1), e.g.:

L'avvocato Giulia Bongiorno, uno dei legali di Giulio Andreotti, è crollata sulla sedia.

The lawyer Giulia Bongiorno, one of Giulio Andreotti's legal advisers, collapsed onto her chair.

It is common to use the definite article when referring to prominent women, but not men, by their surname, e.g. **la Maraini**. With men this practice is usually reserved for artistic and cultural figures of recognized fame, e.g. **il Leopardi**. The use of the definite article with given names is common in the North, especially with feminine names, e.g. **la Chiara**. Use of the article with masculine names, e.g. **il Giuseppe**, is R1. The practice of including both genders in generic cases by giving both ending of adjectives etc. (cf. English he/she etc.) is not widely followed, e.g. **Ogni collega che è interessato/a; lo/la studente; lo/la studente/-essa**.

The title **signore** is used for all adult men, married or single. The form **signorino** is considered old-fashioned and is used jocularly to refer to young boys. The titles **signora** and **signorina** are used for women of all ages. There is no Italian equivalent of *Ms* (cf. section 9.1).

14.2.1 Unrelated m-f nouns

Some rather common pairs belong to this category:

Persons

maschio–femmina; uomo–donna; marito–moglie; padre–madre; papà/babbo–mamma; fratello–sorella; frate–suora; genero–nuora; celibe–nubile (both R2–3), *single man–woman*, and, to a certain extent, **scapolo–zitella** *bachelor–spinster*

Animals (in square brackets the castrated male, when applicable)

fuco/pecchione–ape; montone/ariete/[castrato]–pecora; porco/verro (R3)–**scrofa; toro/[bue/bove]–mucca/vacca**.

14.2.2 Related m–f nouns – anomalous m–f correspondence

Persons

dio–dea; re–regina; eroe–eroina; zar–zarina; stregone–strega
witch–doctor – witch; abate–badessa abbot–abbess; doge–dogressa

Animals (in square brackets the castrated male, when applicable)

cane–cagna; gallo/[cappone]–gallina

14.2.3 Related nouns – patterns of m–f correspondence

Endings		Notes	Examples
m	f		
–a	–a	in most cases (see also section 14.4 and section 15.1 for pl)	pediatra; pianista; ipocrita; atleta; eremita; idiota; collega
	–essa	only a handful of notable cases	duca–duchessa; poeta–poetessa; profeta–profetessa; papa–papessa
–e	–a	most nouns in –ere	cameriere–cameriera
		NOTE: in some cases the feminine indicates an object most nouns in –one very few cases in –ese, –ore (including –tore)	caffettiere <i>café</i> <i>proprietor–caffettiera coffee-maker</i> padrone–padrona; pasticcione–pasticciona <i>bungler</i> marchese–marchesa; signore–signora; pastore–pastora; impostore–impostora
	–e	most nouns in –ese, –ante, –ente , and others	milanese; comandante; cantante; insegnante; agente; dirigente; cliente; testimone; nipote; consorte (R3) <i>spouse</i>
	–essa	very few cases in –ante	mercante–mercantessa
		including one animal	elefante–elefantessa
		two notable cases in –ente	studente–studentessa; presidente–presidentessa (OR presidente , R2–3)
		few notable case in –ore , including two in –tore	professore–professoressa dottore–dottoressa; fattore–fattoressa (NOTE: fattrice = <i>brood cow/mare</i>)

Endings		Notes	Examples
m	f		
		a few notable cases in -one	barone – baronessa
		including some animals	leone – leonessa ; pavone – pavonessa (OR pavona) <i>peacock</i>
		other notable cases	principe – principessa ; generale – generalessa ; oste – ostessa <i>inn-keeper</i> ; sacerdote – sacerdotessa
-tore	-trice	very common	attore – attrice ; senatore – senatrice ; traditore – traditrice (OR traditora)
-(s)sore	-ditrice	usu avoided, very few nouns actually used	possessore – posseditrice ; trasgressore – trasgreditrice ; difensore – difenditrice
-o	-a	very common, also animals	bambino – bambina ; gatto – gatta
	-essa	few nouns	diacono – diaconessa ; avvocato – avvocatessa (<i>avvocata</i> for saints); orco – orchessa <i>oger</i> ; soldato – soldatessa ; druido – druidezza
		sometimes mocking in tone	deputato – deputatessa (instead of deputata) <i>member of parliament</i> ; medico – medichessa ; filosofo – filosofessa (instead of filosofa); diavolo – diavolessa

14.3 Gender associated with types of noun

In many cases the noun or name belonging to the categories sampled in the tables below simply reflects the gender of the “generic” noun that identifies the category itself, e.g. masculine in the case of **oceano**, **mare**, **fiume**, **aeroplano**, **colore**, **orologio**, etc., and feminine in the case of **città**, **isola**, **nave**, **lettera**, etc. In fact, many geographic names are usu accompanied by their generic definition, e.g. **il lago Maggiore**, **il Mare del Nord**, **il Monte Bianco**, though this is not the case for the geographic names in the table, which can all be used without the corresponding noun, e.g. **il (fiume) Tevere**, **il (lago di) Garda**.

Mostly masculine

Type of noun	Examples	(Some) exceptions
Geographic		
oceans, seas	Atlantico, Mediterraneo	la Manica <i>the Channel</i>
lakes	Garda, Trasimeno, Titicaca	–
rivers	Tevere, Po, Nilo, Tamigi <i>Thames, Danubio, Mississippi</i>	Dora, Senna <i>Seine</i> , Loira, Neva, Moldava, Vistola
mountains (not chains); volcanoes	Cervino <i>Matterhorn</i> , Everest; Vesuvio, Etna	Maiella, Marmolada
Time		
days; months; years	lunedì; gennaio; il 2000	only domenica
Transportation		
lorries, trucks	un (camion) Mercedes	–
aeroplanes	un jumbo, il Concorde, lo Spitfire, un Boeing 747	–
Food and drink		
cheeses	il gorgonzola, il pecorino, il parmigiano, lo stilton, il camembert, il gruviera (m inv, but also f)	mozzarella, scamorza, caciotta, ricotta, fontina, robiola, provola
wines	il barolo, uno chardonnay, il barbera (usu m, but also f)	malvasia, vernaccia, albana
Other		
colors	il rosa, il blu	–
languages, dialects	l'italiano, il milanese	–
metals; elements	il bronzo, l'acciaio; l'idrogeno	ghisa <i>cast iron</i>
musical notes	il do, il la, un si	–
numbers, marks	il sette, un trenta	–
other parts of speech used as nouns	il tu, il sì, il perché, il bere, il nulla, i se, i ma, un non so che	
trees	il melo, l'olivo, l'abete <i>fir tree</i> , il pino, l'eucalipto	quercia, palma, tamerice, vite <i>grapevine</i> , iacaranda, sequoia, acacia, robinia
watches	un Rolex, uno Swatch	–

Mostly feminine

Type of noun	Examples	(Some) exceptions
Geographic		
cities	Milano, Napoli, Londra, Berlino, New York (cf. the old-fashioned Nuova York)	il Cairo, il Pireo <i>Piraeus</i> NOTE: with some cities, the masculine indicates a local football club, e.g. il Napoli
islands	Sicilia, Capri, Giava, Cipro	il Madagascar, il Borneo

<i>Mostly feminine</i>		
Type of noun	Examples	(Some) exceptions
Transportation cars	una Ferrari, una Ford, una Mercedes	some cars may be referred to in the masculine (R1), e.g. Carlo s'è fatto il Mercedes <i>Carlo got himself a Merc</i>
ships	la Pinta, la Michelangelo, la Queen Elizabeth, l'Enterprise	the exceptions possibly imply masculine nouns, such as transatlantico , e.g. il Titanic, il Rex, il Lusitania
Other		
abstract qualities	bellezza, bruttezza, bontà, cattiveria	qualities ending in -ore , e.g. grigiore <i>grayness</i> , candore <i>whiteness</i> , innocenza , splendore <i>radiance, beauty</i>
cameras	una Polaroid, una Nikon	—
companies (see also chapter 9)	la Telecom Italia, la Lancia, la Ford, la IBM	—
fruit	mela, pera, banana, pesca, susina <i>plum</i> , nettarina, uva, mora <i>blackberry</i>	many exceptions: lampone <i>raspberry</i> , fico ; many citrus fruits, e.g. arancio (more common than arancia), limone, pompelmo <i>grapefruit</i> , mandarino ; many exotic fruits, e.g. dattero <i>date</i> , ananas <i>pineapple</i> , mango, kiwi (inv)
letters of Roman alphabet (also m, but less common)	la C, una M	un K (usu); ALSO: Greek letters usu masculine, e.g. pi greco (π)
school years	la prima <i>first year of (primary) school</i> , la terza media <i>eighth year</i>	can be m when accompanied by ginnasio or liceo , e.g. il quarto ginnasio
sciences	la matematica, la fisica	il diritto <i>law</i>

14.4 Gender associated with noun ending

The indications given in this section are based on singular endings (for plural formation see section 15.1) and do not necessarily apply to proper names, or to compound (see section 14.5) or suffixed nouns.

Unstressed vowel (including monosyllabic words)

- a generally feminine, with the following notable exceptions (besides those in section 14.3):
 - **pianeta**, **colèra**, **gorilla**, **duca**, **papa**, **boia** *executioner*, **dèspota** (R2–3), **pirata** (usu m), **stratega** (also f), **poliglotta** (R2–3 also f), **camerata** *comrade* (usu fascist, also f)
 - many nouns ending in **-ma**, mostly of Greek derivation, e.g. **problema**, **tema**, **dramma**, **programma**, **linfoma**, **clima**, **sistema**, **panorama**; among the exceptions: **asma**, **gomma**, **fiamma**, **arma**, **rima**, **norma**, **forma**, **calma**, **crema**, **somma**, **firma**, **tarma**, **trama**, **lacrima**
 - some nouns imported from other languages, e.g. **pigiama**, **mantra** (inv), **lama** (inv) or derived from verbal forms, e.g. **vaglia** (inv) *money order*, or pronouns, e.g. **nulla** (inv), or proper names, e.g. **barabba** (inv) *rogue*
 - some (R1/R1*) nouns of dialectal origin, e.g. **pirla** (R1* Milan, inv) *prick*, **ghisa** (R1 Milan, inv) *traffic warden*
 - some nouns with the following endings are masculine when referring to males:
 - arca** meaning ‘leader’, e.g. **patriarca** (only m), **monarca** (only m), **oligarca**; such nouns are seldom feminine, with the exception of **matriarca** (only f)
 - iatra** meaning ‘doctor’, e.g. **pediatra**, **psichiatra**
 - ista** many nouns, e.g. **artista**, **giornalista**, **ottimista**
 - asta** e.g. **ginnasta**, **cineasta**, **pederasta** (only m)
 - eta** e.g. **atleta**, **analfabeta** *illiterate*, **asceta**, **anacoreta** (R3) *anchorite*; NOTE: **poeta** and **profeta** are only m (see section 14.2.3)
 - ita** e.g. **semita**, **eremita**, **vietnamita**, all derived from adjectives and usu indicating belonging or affiliation to peoples, religions, cults, etc.; NOTE: **parassita** is feminine only when referring to women
 - ota** e.g. **patriota**, **pilota**, **cipriota**, **idiota**, similar meanings but fewer nouns than the above category
 - nauta** very few nouns, e.g. **astronauta**
 - euta** very few nouns, e.g. **terapeuta**
 - cida** e.g. **omicida** *killer*; chemicals with this ending are only masculine, e.g. **erbicida**, **germicida**
- e masculine or feminine, but the following subcategories are worthy of notice:
 - ere** masculine, whether persons (usu “doers”), e.g. **cassiere**, or things, e.g. **carcere** *jail*; exceptions are **polvere**, **cenere**
 - ore** masculine, whether persons (usu “doers”), e.g. **attore**, **scrittore**, **pittore**, or things, e.g. **colore**, **dolore**; exception: **fólgore** (f) *flash of lightning*
 - trice** feminine, usu “doers,” e.g. **attrice**, **scrittrice**, **pittrice**
 - sione/-zione** generally feminine, e.g. **confusione**, **emozione** (NOTE that this does not necessarily apply to compound nouns, e.g. **capostazione** [m] *station-master*, or possible “alterati”, e.g. **negozione** [m] *big shop*)

- i mostly masculine: many imports, e.g. **samurai**, **sci**, and compounds (see section 14.5), e.g. **saliscendi**, **millepiedi**, **portabagagli**; beside the rather technical **cisti** (f R2–3) *cyst*, **colecisti** (f R3) *cholecyst* and **endiadi** (f R3) *hendyadis*, a most notable exception is the whole category of nouns ending in
 -si mostly feminine, e.g. **crisi**, **tesi**, with very few exceptions, e.g. **brindisi**
 (m) *toast*
- o mostly masculine, with the following notable exceptions:
 - **mano**, **dinamo**, **virago** (R3, pl **viragini**); **eco** (less common m s; only m pl)
 - **soprano**, **contralto**, **mezzosoprano** (sometimes f, usu m s, only m pl)
 - elliptic expressions, e.g. **squillo** from **ragazza squillo** *call-girl*
 - abbreviated forms of feminine nouns, e.g. **radio**, **auto**, **moto**, **foto**
 NOTE: the abbreviated form of **videocassetta** (f) is **video** (m), which is also the abbreviation for **videoregistratore** (m) *videorecorder*
- u masculine, very few nouns altogether, many of them monosyllabic, mostly imported from other languages, e.g. **urdu**, **gnu**; exception: **gru** (f) *crane*

Stressed vowel

- à generally feminine, e.g. **onestà**, **città**, with few exceptions, e.g. **scià shah**, **baccalà** *stockfish*, **lillà** *lilac*, **papà**, **podestà**, **taffetà**
- è generally masculine; very few nouns (often from French), e.g. **caffè**, **bidè**, **gilè** *waistcoat*, *vest*; some exceptions, e.g. **koinè** (f R3)
- é masculine; besides **perché** used as a noun, a handful of French derived nouns, e.g. **scimpanzé** (often pronounced with -è), **variété** *variety show*; only exception **pansé** (f) *pansy* (also pronounced with -è)
- ì mostly masculine; very few nouns, e.g. **supplì** *rice croquette*, **tassì**, **colibrì**; notable exception: **pipì** (f) *wee-wee*
- ò masculine; few nouns (many of which are adaptations from French), e.g. **paltò** *coat*, **comò** *chest of drawers*, **pedalò** *pedal boat*, **rondò**, **falò** *bonfire*
- ó no nouns
- ù mostly masculine (often from other languages), e.g. **bambù**, **cucù**, **caucciù**; important exceptions are the Latin-derived **gioventù**, **schiavitù** *slavery*, **servitù** *servitude*, *servants*, **virtù**, **tribù**, and the modern **tivù**/**tivvù** *TV*

Consonant (including -y)

Generally masculine (mostly nouns from other languages), e.g. **bar**, **camion**, **virus**. Among the common feminine nouns in this group (beside those listed in the tables above) are **e-mail** (usu f), **viacard** *type of motorway credit card*, **glasnost**, **(bottiglia) molotov** *Molotov cocktail*, **vamp**.

NOTE: **Internet** is usu m (and without article).

14.5 Gender of compound nouns

14.5.1 Verb + noun

Most compound nouns belong to this category, their typical (singular) form being a second person singular imperative followed by a noun in the singular or plural. They are mostly masculine, as shown in detail below.

Persons

As with non-compound nouns, the gender of V + N compound nouns referring to persons may reflect the sex of the referent. In the great majority of cases this will only show in a change of article, the actual noun being invariable, e.g.:

un/una perdigiorno *idler*, **un/una voltagabbana** *turncoat*, **un/una rubacuori** *charmer*, **un/una raccattapalle** *ball boy/girl*

In some cases, especially with nouns relating to activities traditionally carried out by men, the feminine is not used in practice, but it is still possible in theory, e.g.:

un/(una?) taglialegna *woodcutter*, **uno/(una?) spazzacamino** *chimney-sweeper*, **un/(una?) guardalinee** *linesman*, *linesperson*

Animals

Very few V + N nouns refer to animals. They appear to be masculine, without a form for the female. As usual in these cases, their feminine is formed by adding **femmina**, e.g.:

un beccafico/un beccafico femmina *garden warbler*, **un succiacapre/un succiacapre femmina** *nightjar*, *goatsucker*

Objects etc.

For the great majority of the other cases, V + N compound nouns are masculine, e.g.:

il caricabatteria *battery charger*, **il fermacarte** *paper-weight*, **il passatempo** *pastime*, **il battipanni** *carpet-beater*

Notable exceptions are some nouns referring to some domestic appliances, e.g.:

la lavabiancheria (less common than **lavatrice**) *washing machine*, **la lavapiatti/la lavastoviglie** *dishwasher*

– some nouns referring to ships, e.g.

la portaerei *aircraft-carrier*, **la portaelicotteri** *helicopter-carrier*

NOTE: **rompighiaccio** *ice-breaker* is usually masculine

– and a few more where a feminine noun (indicated in brackets) might be implied, e.g.:

la (macchinetta) mangiasoldi *slot-machine*, lit *money-eater* (m/f when referring to persons), **la (pistola) scacciacani** (also m) *blank pistol*

14.5.2 Noun + noun

Persons

There is a good number of N + N compound nouns referring to persons, many of them of the kind **capo** + noun. They usually reflect the sex of the person they refer to. The change of gender usually shows only in the article, since the second noun is in most cases gender-invariable, e.g.

il/la capofamiglia *head of the family*, **il/la capoufficio** *head clerk*.

There are a few cases where the second noun, and therefore the compound noun, has a distinct feminine form, e.g.:

il caporedattore/la caporedattrice *editor-in-chief*, **il capocuoco/la capocuoca** *head-cook*, **il sordomuto/la sordomuta** *deaf-mute*,

and a few cases where, as seen elsewhere, the masculine is still the only gender in use, for traditional or historical reasons, e.g.

il capocomico *manager of a theatre company*, **il capomastro** *master builder*.

Animals

There are not many common animal nouns in this category. Their gender tends to reflect the gender of the head noun, which in the majority of the cases appears to be masculine, e.g.:

il pescecane *shark*, **il pescespada** *swordfish*, **il gattopardo** *serval, ocelot*, **il toporagno** *shrew*.

Among the very few feminine nouns, **la volpoca** R3, *sheld-fowl*, whereas **grillotalpa** *mole cricket* can be masculine (more common in the singular) or feminine (esp in the more common plural **grillotalpe**). In all cases there seem to be no distinct forms for the opposite sex: “a female shark” will therefore be **un pescecane femmina**.

Objects etc.

In most cases, the gender of all the other N + N compounds tends to reflect the gender of the noun perceived as the “head” of the expression corresponding to the compound noun. While practically irrelevant in the case of compounds formed by nouns of the same gender, e.g.:

autostrada (f) *motorway*, **cassapanca** (f) *box seat*, **cinemateatro** (m) *cinema-theater*, **capolavoro** (m) *masterpiece*,

this becomes important in the case of “m + f” or “f + m” nouns, e.g.:

agopuntura (= **puntura** [f] **con aghi**) *feminine acupuncture*

bagnoschiума (= **schiuma** [f] **per il bagno**) *feminine bubblebath*

capolinea (= **capo** [m] **della linea**) *masculine terminus*

fondovalle (= **fondo** [m] **della valle**) *masculine bottom of the valley*

pallacanestro (= **palla** [f] **a canestro**) *feminine basket-ball*

pallavolo (= **palla** [f] **a volo**) *feminine volley-ball*

acquascooter (= **scooter** [m] **acquatico**) *masculine jetski*

cartamodello (= **modello** [m] **di carta**) *masculine paper pattern*

There is a number of cases that do not seem to follow this pattern, or whose “head noun” is not easily identifiable, e.g.:

il centrodestra/-sinistra *center-right/left*, **il mappamondo** (*globe*), **il crocevia** *crossroads*.

14.5.3 Noun + adjective/adjective + noun

Only compounds where the noun is the head of the phrase and is therefore modified by the adjective are considered here. Compounds like **terrapieno** *embankment* (lit *full of earth*) are not included, whereas those like **terracotta** (lit *cooked earth*) are.

Persons

There is a tendency to reflect the gender of the person the noun refers to. This can be done through the article, e.g.:

un/una quattrocchi (R1) *four-eyes*, **un/una pellerossa** lit *redskin* or, in A + N cases, when the noun allows it, morphologically, e.g.:

granduca/graduchessa, gentiluomo/gentildonna

Some compounds are still only used in the masculine, e.g. **un piedipiatti** (R1) *flatfoot*, although nothing, except custom, seems to prevent their use in the feminine. On the other hand, **la buonanima** *the dear departed* is feminine even when referring to males.

Animals

These are not common and usually describe a physical characteristic of the animal in question. The gender of the compound is usually the same as the noun component, e.g. **il pettirosso** *robin*, lit *red breast*, but there are a number of cases where this does not apply, e.g. **la capinera** *blackcap*, lit *black head*. The plural noun compounds **millepiedi** and **centopiedi** are both masculine.

Apart from **il/la purosangue** *thoroughbred*, which distinguishes between male and female, the other N + A/A + N nouns referring to animals must use the **maschio/femmina** addition.

Objects etc.

For the majority of the remaining N + A/A + N compounds the gender tends to be the same as that of the noun component, e.g.:

il granturco *maize, corn*, **la cartapesta** *papier-mâché*, **il mezzogiorno**, **la mezzanotte**.

14.5.4 Other compounds

These include V + V, A + A, and compounds with adverbs, pronouns, prepositions, more than two components, etc.

Persons

On the whole, the gender of the compound will reflect the sex of the person it refers to, e.g. **il/la fuorilegge** *outlaw*, **il/la nullatenente** *propertyless (person)*, **il/la senzatetto** *homeless person*, **il/la tuttofare** *jack of all trades/maid of all work*. Whenever the final element of the compound makes it possible, the gender will show in the ending, e.g. **bianconero/-a** *Juventus supporter*, **maleducato/-a** *impolite person*. However, some words maintain the original gender of the head noun regardless of the sex of the referent, e.g. **la controfigura** *double (in acting)*.

Animals

The number of animal denominations in this category is too small to allow the identification of patterns of any kind.

Objects etc.

Compounds that do not have a noun component or that do have a verb component tend to be masculine, e.g.:

il saltimbocca *kind of meat dish*, **il bagnasciuga** *shoreline*, **il toccasana** *cure-all*, **il parapiglia** *hubbub*, **il nontiscordardimé** *forget-me-not*, **il chiaroscuro**, **il pianoforte**, **il benservito** *testimonial*; among the exceptions, **la lavasciuga** *washer-dryer*, **la tagliacuce** *cutting-sewing machine*, **il/la sempreverde** *evergreen* (also adj), **la caldarrosta** *roast chestnut*, which implies **castagna**.

In all other compound nouns the gender tends to be the same as that of the noun, if this is the head of the phrase, e.g.:

capodanno (= **capo** [m] **dell'anno**) masculine
manodopera (**mano** [f] **d'opera**) feminine
controcanto (= **canto** [m] **contro**) masculine
controproposta (= **proposta** [f] **contro**) feminine
soprannome (= **nome** [m] **in più**) masculine
soprattassa (= **tassa** [f] **in più**) feminine
sottoprodotto (= **prodotto** [m] **derivato**) masculine
sottoveste (= **veste** [f] **sottostante**) feminine
retrogusto (= **gusto** [m] **che segue**) masculine
retromarcia (**marcia** [f] **indietro**) feminine

When the noun is not the head of the phrase, the gender of the compound tends to be masculine, even if the noun component is feminine, e.g.:

dopobarba (= **dopo la rasatura della barba**) masculine
dopoguerra (= **dopo la guerra**) masculine
doposcuola (= **dopo la scuola**) masculine
entroterra (= **dentro la terra**) masculine
fuoripista (= **fuori dalla pista**) masculine
fuoristrada (= **fuori dalla strada**) masculine
oltretomba (= **oltre la tomba**) masculine
sottobottiglia (= **sotto la bottiglia**) masculine

sottogola (= **sotto la gola**) masculine

sottopancia (= **sotto la pancia**) masculine

sottoscala (= **sotto la scala**) masculine

NOTE the difference between

il retroscena (= **dietro la scena**), masculine, *backstage activity*, and

la retroscena (= **la scena dietro**), feminine, *backstage*.

Among the compound nouns that do not follow this pattern:

retrobottega (backshop) and **retrocucina** (scullery) can be both masculine or feminine, probably because they allow two interpretations.

controluce can be masculine (esp with regard to photos etc. taken **contro la luce**), or feminine (when the stress is on the type of lighting, **luce contro**)

fuoriserie is feminine, probably because it implies **automobile** or **macchina** or **vettura**.

14.6 Homonyms distinguished by gender

The following is a sample of Italian homonyms distinguished, at least in the singular, by their gender.

	Masculine	Feminine
boa	(inv) boa constrictor; feather boa	buoy
caccia	(inv) fighter plane; destroyer	hunt
camerata	male fascist comrade	dormitory; female fascist comrade
capitale	capital (econ.)	capital (city)
cappa	(inv) the letter “k”	cloak, cape, e.g. cappa e spada = cloak and dagger; hood (as in fireplaces etc.); ALSO, less common, the letter “k”
finale	end, ending; finale	final (sport, competitions)
fine	end = goal, purpose, outcome; NOTE: lieto fine = happy ending; il fine settimana = the week-end	end = conclusion
fonte	only in il fonte battesimale = the christening font	fountain, source (also fig)
fronte	front (military, political, weather)	forehead, brow
gamma	(inv) third letter of the Greek alphabet	range, spectrum; gamut, scale
genesì (R3)	Genesis (book of the Bible)	genesis
granata	(inv) color garnet; supporter or player of the Torino football team	broom; grenade
morale	morale	morals, morality; moral (of a story etc.)

	Masculine	Feminine
moto	motion; movement; physical exercise, e.g. fare un po' di moto = to take some exercise; uprising (R2–3)	(inv) short for motocicletta = motorbike
noce	walnut tree, wood	walnut
pianeta	planet	chasuble (R3)
radio	radius (bone) (R3); radium	(inv) radio, wireless
rosa	(inv) color pink	rose
via	(inv) start, starting signal, e.g. dare il via = to give the starting signal	road, street, path; way
volante	steering wheel	flying squad

14.7 Nouns with both masculine and feminine plurals

A small number of masculine nouns in **-o** boast two plural forms, a regular form in **-i** and an “exceptional” feminine form in **-a**, a relic of the plural ending of the original Latin neuter noun. Between the two forms there is, at times, a difference in meaning, as shown in the sample below.

Note that in some cases, the **-a** ending indicates a “set” [e.g. **le lenzuola** = top and bottom sheets of a bed] as opposed to a collection of separate items [e.g. **quattro lenzuoli di misura diversa** = four sheets of different sizes]. In these cases, the form in **-i** is more likely to be associated with extended or figurative meanings of the word.

braccio (arm)

braccia	human arms; units of length
bracci	fig, generally of things, e.g. i bracci di una croce = the limbs of a cross; i bracci di un penitenziario = the wings of a penitentiary

budello (only fig, dark and narrow passage; hose, pipe)

budella	intestines (also budelle [R1])
budelli	(fig) dark and narrow passages; hoses, pipes

calcagno (heel)

calcagna	heels (fig): e.g. avere qu alle calcagna = to have sb at one's heels
calcagni	heels (lit)

cervello (brain, brains)

cervella (R3)	brains (= cerebral matter, cf. the idiom farsi saltare le cervella = to blow one's brains out)
cervelli	brainy people, geniuses

ciglio (eyelash; edge of a road, a ravine, a ditch and similar)	
ciglia	eyelashes; (= sopracciglia) eyebrows
cigli	edges (of roads, ravines, ditches, and similar)
corno (horn)	
cornea	horns (of animals, in sets)
corni	horns (musical instruments, and fig, e.g. i corni di un dilemma)
cuoio (leather)	
cuoia	only in idioms like tirare le cuoia (R1–2) = to kick the bucket
cuoi	leathers, hides (lit)
dito (finger)	
dita	fingers (in sets)
diti	(less frequent) fingers (considered separately)
filo (thread)	
fila	threads (taken collectively, only in some expressions, e.g. le fila di una congiura = the threads of a plot)
fili	threads (lit, e.g. fili di cotone = cotton threads; fili elettrici = electric wires; fili d'erba = blades of grass)
fondamento (foundation)	
fondamenta	foundations (lit, e.g. le fondamenta di una casa)
fondamenti	foundations (fig = fundamental principles, e.g. i fondamenti di una teoria)
fuso (spindle; time zone)	
fusa	only in fare le fusa = to purr (like a cat)
fusi	spindles; time zones
gesto (gesture)	
gesta	exploits, feats, glorious deeds
gesti	gestures
ginocchio (knee)	
ginocchia	knees, esp in sets, e.g. sedersi sulle ginocchia [less common sui ginocchi] di qu = to sit on sb's knees
ginocchi	knees, esp not as a set, e.g. mi fanno male i ginocchi
grido/urlo (cry, scream)	
grida/urla	cries, screams (of people)
gridi/urli	cries, screams (esp of animals)
labbro (lip)	
labbra	lips (lit)

labbri	lips (fig, e.g. i labbri di una ferita = the lips of a wound)
lenzuolo (bed sheet)	
lenzuola	sheets (gen, esp in sets)
lenzuoli	sheets (considered separately)
membro (limb; member)	
membra (R2–3)	limbs (e.g. le membra superiori = the upper limbs, the arms)
membri	members (e.g. i membri del Parlamento)
muro (wall)	
mura	walls (as a set, esp the fortified walls of a city or a fortress)
muri	walls (considered separately, the walls of a house)
osso (bone)	
ossa	bones (in sets, e.g. le ossa della mano = the bones of the hand, and also in some idioms, e.g. essere pelle e ossa = to be skin and bone)
ossi	bones (considered separately, esp of butchered animals)
Though obviously not belonging to the same category, we include here	
rèni (m)	kidneys, the regular plural form of rène (m) (<i>kidney</i>) (often pronounced rène , rèni)
réni (f)	loins, (lower) back, from Lat. <i>renes</i> , plural of <i>ren</i> (<i>kidney</i>)

15 Number

15.1 Formation of plurals

The following description covers the most productive categories of nouns (and adjectives) in Italian. However, there are many exceptions and the student should check with a good dictionary if in doubt.

Regular plurals

<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>	
-a (f)	-e	la casa > le case
-a (m)	-i	il problema > i problemi
-e (m/f)	-i	l'insegnante > gli/le insegnanti
-o (m)	-i	il libro > i libri
-o (f)	-i	la mano > le mani , l'eco > gli echi

Nouns with c or g in the final syllable

The stress is often a guide to forming the plural, though there are many exceptions.

In some words, an accent is used to indicate the main stress but should not be used when writing. See p. 29.

<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>	
-ca, -ga (f)	-che, -ghe	la bottega > le botteghe
-ca, -ga (m)	-chi, -ghi	il patriarca > i patriarchi
-co, -go (m)	-chi, -ghi	when stress on penultimate syllable: il cuoco > i cuochi BUT amici, nemici, greci, porci , etc.
	-ci, -gi	when stress on third-to-last syllable: il medico > i medici BUT incarichi, vàlichì, pròfughi , etc.
-logo, -fago	-logi, -fagi	names of persons: il politologo > i politòlogi , l'antropofago > gli antropòfagi
	-loghi, -faghi	names of things: il dialogo > i diàloghi il sarcofago > i sarcòfaghi
-cia, -gia	-cie, -gie	when stress on the i : la bugia > le bugie
	-cie, -gie	when stress on the preceding syllable and a vowel comes before the c or g : la camicia > le camicie
	-ce, -ge (less common -cie, -gie)	when stress on the preceding syllable and a consonant comes before the c or g : la provincia > le province

Nouns in -io

When the stress is on the **i**, the plural is **-ii**. When the stress is on the preceding syllable, the plural is **-i**, e.g.:

lo zio > **gli zii**; il bacio > **i baci**
BUT il tempio > **i templi**

Nouns in -ista, -cida, and -iatra

These have one singular form and two plural forms, e.g.:

il giornalista > **i giornalisti**, la giornalista > **le giornaliste**
il suicida > **i suicidi**, la suicida > **le suicide**
lo psichiatra > **gli psichiatri**, la psichiatra > **le psichiatre**

Invariable nouns and adjectives

- those ending in an accented vowel, e.g.:
la città > **le città**, il caffè > **i caffè**, la virtù > **le virtù**
- monosyllables:
il re > **i re**

- foreign words (adding **s** is now rather old-fashioned or used for effect):
il film > **i film**, la star > **le star**
- words which are abbreviations of other words or acronyms (cf. chapter 9), e.g.:
il cinema > **i cinema**; la lampo (= la chiusura lampo) > **le lampo**;
l'ufo > **gli ufo**
- nouns ending in **i** or **ie**:
la crisi > **le crisi**, il brindisi > **i brindisi**, la serie > **le serie**
(BUT la moglie > **le mogli**, la superficie > **le superfici** OR **superficie**)
- certain masculine nouns ending in **a**:
il gorilla > **i gorilla**, il sosia > **i sosia**
- proper names are usually invariable:
i Conversano the Conversano family, OR Mr and Mrs Conversano;
i signori Conversano Mr and Mrs Conversano
NOTE: in R3 a given name may be used in the plural to refer to
paintings produced by that person, e.g.:
due splendidi Tiziani two splendid paintings by Titian
AND **Le tre Marie** is the name of restaurants and bakeries in several
Italian cities
- letters of alphabet:
una emme > **due emme**

Common exceptions

l'ala > **le ali**; l'arma > **le armi**; il bue > **i buoi**; il dio > **gli dei**
See section 14.7 for nouns that change gender in the plural.

15.2 Plural of compound nouns

The plural of compound nouns formed from other nouns and/or adjectives generally follows the above rules, when the compound is felt to be a word in its own right, e.g.:

l'autostrada > **le autostrade**

il pescecane > **i pescecani**

l'altoparlante > **gli altoparlanti**

BUT il purosangue > **i purosangue**, la mezzaluna > **le mezzelune**

In higher registers, both elements may sometimes be pluralized, e.g.:

il pomodoro > **i pomodori, pomidoro** or **pomidori** (R3); la

cassaforte > **le cassaforti, casseforti** (R3).

Nouns beginning with **capo-** follow the normal rules, except when **capo-** means "person in charge of something." In this case, masculine nouns pluralize only the **capo** part of the word, and feminine nouns are invariable, e.g.:

il capolavoro > **i capolavori** (ALSO **capoluoghi, capoversi**, etc.)

il capopartito > **i capipartito** (ALSO **capistazione, capigruppo, capiscuola**, etc.)

la capopartito > **le capopartito, le caposquadra**, etc.

When one noun follows another, acting as an adjective, it does not change in the plural, e.g.:

la conferenza stampa > **le conferenze stampa**

cf. la (chiusura) lampo > **le lampo**

Compound nouns formed with a verb as first element (they are usually masculine) form their plural according to what the second element is.

Those formed with a masculine singular noun or with **-mano** form a regular plural, and others are invariable:

Masculine singular	il passaporto > i passaporti
	il parafulmine > i parafulmini
“Mano”	l’asciugamano > gli asciugamani
Feminine singular	lo scioglilingua > gli scioglilingua
	il portacenere > i portacenere
Plural	il cavatappi > i cavatappi
	il guastafeste > i guastafeste
Verb	il dormiveglia > i dormiveglia

15.3 Italian plurals which correspond to English singulars

i bagagli	luggage, baggage
dare un sacco di botte a qu	to give sb a hiding
i capelli	hair
i compiti	homework
essere in buone condizioni	to be in good condition
in contanti	in cash
le conoscenze (also in sg)	knowledge
i dati	data (used both as sing and pl in English)
(il dato	datum (in science))
dare le dimissioni	to tender one’s resignation
Buone Feste	Merry Christmas (and Happy New Year)
le mie forze	my strength
le forze dell’ordine	the police force
i funerali (R3) ALSO il	funeral
funerale	
le informazioni	information
(una informazione	an item of information)
le intemperie (R3)	bad weather
con gli interessi	with interest (financial), abundantly (gen)
le mie letture	my reading

i mezzi pubblici	public transport
le munizioni	ammunition
le nozze (R2–3)	wedding, nuptials
le posate	cutlery
le Poste (R1–2)	Post Office, postal service
fare dei progressi	to make progress
i reumatismi (R3)	rheumatism
le ricerche	research
(una ricerca	a research project)
i rifiuti	rubbish
le sciocchezze	nonsense
(una sciocchezza	a silly thing, piece of nonsense)
i soldi	money
gli spaghetti sono pronti	the spaghetti is ready
a mie spese, a spese di	at my expense, at the expense of
gli spiccioli	loose change
le stoviglie (R3)	crockery
le tenebre (R3)	darkness
i vestiti	clothing, clothes
nelle vicinanze di	in the vicinity of
i viveri	food, provisions

15.4 Italian singulars which correspond to English plurals

l'archivio	archives
l'avena	oats
la bilancia	(weighing) scales
il formicolio	pins and needles
la gente	people
la merce	goods
il morbillo	measles
il pantalone (R3, fashion)	trousers
il pigiama	pyjamas
la pinza , ALSO pl	pincers
la scala	stairs
la statistica	set of statistics; statistics as a subject
la tattica	tactics
l'uva	grapes
un chicco d'uva = a grape	

NOTE **la fisica** (*physics*), **la linguistica** (*linguistics*), **la politica** (*politics*) etc., whose English forms appear to be plural but are grammatically singular.

15.5 Number concord

Collective nouns

More formal usage requires agreement with the singular collective noun, but in informal usage the plural noun causes the verb to go into the plural, e.g.:

Una folla di uomini, donne e bambini era (R2–3) / erano (R1–2) sulla strada.

All'interno c'era (R2–3) / c'erano (R1–2) una decina di persone.

La maggior parte dei deputati era (R2–3) / erano (R1–2) d'accordo con la proposta.

However, if the noun following the collective noun is in the singular, the verb is in the singular, e.g.:

La maggior parte della popolazione era d'accordo con la proposta.

Some words, when used in a collective way, have lost their literal meaning and usually take a plural verb (the singular is R2–3), e.g.:

C'erano un sacco di tifosi alla stazione.

Per fare ciò sono necessari un mucchio di soldi.

Some singular nouns that refer to groups of people may take a singular or plural verb in English, but always take a singular verb in Italian, e.g.

comitato, famiglia, polizia, squadra:

Il comitato era contrario alla proposta.

The committee was/were opposed to the proposal.

Essere

Essere is used in the plural if there is a plural noun on either side of it, and it also agrees with a first or second person element if there is one, e.g.:

Il problema sono gli studenti.

I rappresentanti siete voi.

La presidente sei tu.

Chi è stato? – Sono stato/stata io.

Either/or, neither/nor

o . . . o takes a verb in the singular (less commonly in the plural) if the two items mentioned are singular, otherwise in the plural, e.g.:

O l'uno o l'altro mi va bene.

Secondo me, vinceranno o gli italiani o i tedeschi.

né . . . né takes a verb in the plural (but may be in the singular if the subject follows), e.g.:

Né Matteo né Chiara vanno alla festa.

Non siamo andati né io né mia moglie.

Non è arrivato né il capo né il suo vice.

16 Pronouns

There are two forms of personal pronouns in Italian: unstressed (or “conjunctive” or “clitic”) and stressed (or “disjunctive” or “free”). Subject pronouns are stressed only; object pronouns have two forms: stressed and unstressed.

Stressed pronouns are used for emphasis or contrast, or to remove ambiguity. Thus subject pronouns, which are always stressed, are usually not used except for these reasons. They are much more common in informal conversation than in writing. Stressed object pronouns are used like nouns, e.g. they follow verbs and are always separate from them.

16.1 First- and second-person pronouns

Note these combinations of subject pronouns:

tu ed io; io e te (R1–2)

The following forms are dialectal in origin and are found in R1:

subject pronouns: **te** (Center)

subject and object pronouns: **mi, ti, noialtri, voialtri** (Northern)

When **mi, ti, ci, vi** are direct objects, a following past participle tends not to agree except in more formal usage, e.g.:

Ciao Maria! Non ti ho visto alla festa! (Non ti ho vista, R2–3)

With **Lei**, when used as a second-person pronoun, participles and adjectives tend to agree with the sex of the person in question (cf. section 14.2), but in formal registers participles (but less so adjectives) may agree with the gender of the pronoun, e.g.:

R1* vulgar or indecent
R1 informal, colloquial
R2 neutral, unmarked
R3 formal, written
Italian words and expressions are R2 unless otherwise indicated. See also p. 5.

Ah, dottor Rossi, non L'ho visto ieri sera alla riunione! (L'ho vista, R3)

16.2 Third-person pronouns

Stressed forms

The most commonly used stressed forms are **lui**, **lei**, **loro**. Other forms are still used in more formal registers, especially written: **egli** (R2–3)/ **ella** (R3) refer to persons; **essa**, **essi** and **esse** (R2–3) refer to persons, animals, or things; **esso** (R3) refers only to animals or things. All of these pronouns can be used as stressed object forms, except **egli** and **esso**. However, there is some uncertainty about the appropriate use of these forms, and in informal speech it is common to use a demonstrative (**quello** etc.) to refer to things.

Direct object (unstressed)

The unstressed direct object forms are **lo**, **la**, **li**, **le**. **Lo** also functions as a kind of neutral pronoun in referring to an entire clause and is often not translated in English, e.g.:

La nostra squadra vincerà sicuramente. – Chi lo dice? – Non lo so.

Our team will win for sure. – Says who? – I don't know.

With the verb **essere** and similar verbs, **lo** replaces a complement of the verb (noun, adjective – of either gender or number – or phrase), e.g.:

Lei è una persona interessante, lo è sempre stata.

She is an interesting person, she always has been.

Alcune di queste persone sono nate povere, altre lo sono diventate per qualche disgrazia.

Some of these people were born poor, others became (poor) through some misfortune.

Per dire no alla guerra siamo in piazza oggi come lo siamo stati l'anno scorso.

To say no to war we are in the streets today like we were last year.

La is used in many idioms: see section 4.5.1.

Indirect object (unstressed)

The indirect object forms are **gli** and **le** (singular) and **gli** (plural) as well as **ci** and **ne**. **Gli** is preferred to stressed **loro** in informal usage and, increasingly, in more formal registers as well. **Gli** is also used in place of feminine singular **le** in informal usage, especially in Central Italy, but this is considered ungrammatical.

Ci

Ci is traditionally used for reference to animals or things (as well as being first person plural). It is often used in R1 in place of **gli** or **le** for reference

to people, as a way of simplifying the range of pronouns in use and also because most dialects use one form for all indirect object reference to persons, animals, and things. This usage is considered incorrect in Italian, with the exception of certain uses where **ci** does not correspond to a phrase with **a** but to some other preposition, e.g.:

Non ci puoi contare [ci = su di lui]

You can't rely on him.

On the other hand, **gli** and **le** are being used more and more for reference to animals and also things, and it may be that **ci** is being restricted to its adverbial uses (e.g. **non ci sono mai stato**, where **ci** = **in quel luogo**).

Non ci capisco niente [ci = di ciò].

I can't understand anything (of it).

Non ci faccio niente [ci = con ciò].

I can't do anything with it.

Ci is universally used in the expressions **ce l'ho**, **non ce l'ho**, etc., and in R1-2 is often used with **avere** meaning "to possess," e.g.:

C'ho una fame! (R1-2)

I'm so hungry!

It also combines with a number of common verbs to change the meaning, sometimes considerably (cf. section 4.5.3), e.g.:

volerci to be necessary

metterci to take (a period of time)

entrarci to be relevant

vederci to be able to see

sentirci to be able to hear

Ne

Ne is used for reference to persons, animals, things, and also to a previous sentence. It corresponds to a phrase introduced by **di** or **da** (see also section 4.5.2), e.g.:

Chiara è partita l'anno scorso e non ne ho avuto più notizie.

Chiara left last year and I have not had any news of her.

Siamo arrivati a Roma la mattina e ne siamo partiti la sera.

We arrived in Rome in the morning and left (from there) in the evening.

Mi assicurava che parlava con il direttore domani, ma ne dubito.

He assured me he would talk to the manager tomorrow, but I doubt it (lit of it).

Ne is also used with a partitive meaning and is often untranslated in English. In this case it may require agreement with a past participle in a compound tense. Usage varies widely, though in general agreement occurs when there is no object following the verb, e.g.:

Hai comprato delle banane? – Sì, ne ho comprate.

Did you buy any bananas? – Yes, I bought some.

and when the verb is followed by a numeral or indefinite pronoun of quantity, e.g.:

Hai comprato dei limoni? – Sì, ne ho comprati tre.

Did you buy any lemons? – Yes, I bought three.

Hai comprato delle mele? – Sì, ne ho comprate molte / ne ho comprata una.

Did you buy any apples? – Yes, I bought many / I bought one.

When the verb is followed by a noun, the participle usually agrees with the noun or, less commonly, with **ne**, e.g.:

Hai comprato delle arance? – Sì, ne ho comprato un chilo.

Did you buy any oranges? – Yes, I bought a kilo.

Hai comprato delle pesche? – Sì, ne ho comprati (OR comprate) due chili.

Did you buy any peaches? – Yes, I bought two kilos.

Similarly, when the verb is reflexive, the participle agrees with the following noun or, less commonly, with **ne** or, even less commonly, the subject, e.g.:

Elena ha comprato delle pere? Sì, se ne è comprati (OR comprate OR comprata) due chili.

Did Elena buy any pears? – Yes, she bought herself two kilos (of them).

16.3 Order of object pronouns

The order of unstressed pronouns relative to each other is governed by this table:

mi	gli le (dative)	vi ti	ci	si (reflexive)	lo la li le	si (impersonal)	ne
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A second principle is:

indirect object	direct object
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While many combinations of unstressed pronouns are possible in theory, only certain types tend to occur in practice. These are:

- an indirect object followed by **lo, la, li, le** or **ne**. The following changes occur: **mi, ti, si** (reflexive only), **ci, vi** become **me, te, se, ce, ve**; and **gli** and **le** both become **glie-** and attach to the following pronoun, e.g.:

te lo chiedo

I'm asking you (for it) / I'm requesting it of you

ce ne parlava

she was speaking about it to us

glielo chiedo

I'll ask him (for it) / I'll ask her (for it) / I'll ask them (for it)

gliene parlava

she was speaking about it to us

- **ci** (or **vi** R2–3) with a direct object pronoun or **ne**. Note the varying position of **ci**:
mi ci porti?
 will you take me there?
non ti ci vedo
 I can't see you there / in that situation
ce lo troverai domani
 you will find him there tomorrow
ce ne sono tanti / ve ne sono tanti (R2–3)
 there are lots of them
- reflexive **si** with a direct object (following) or indirect object (preceding), e.g.:
se lo mangia tutto lui
 he eats it all himself
gli si avvicina
 she goes up to him
- impersonal **si** with a direct or indirect object or **ne**. Note the position of impersonal **si** compared to reflexive **si**:
La pasta? La si prepara in cinque minuti.
 The pasta? It is / can be prepared in five minutes.
La pasta? Se la prepara in cinque minuti.
 The pasta? He prepares it for himself in five minutes.
se ne parla
 one talks about it OR he talks to himself about it
mi si dice che . . .
 I am told that . . .
- groups of more than two pronouns are possible in theory, but in practice the only such groups usually include a pair of indirect + object pronouns plus impersonal **si**, e.g.:
glielo si dice
 it is said to him/her/them
gli se ne parla (less common, **gliene si parla**)
 one talks to him/her/them about it

16.4 Pronouns and verb

Before finite verbs:

Ti parlo per il tuo bene.

I'm speaking to you for your good.

After and attached to non-finite forms – gerund, infinitive, and participle used alone – and **ecco**:

vedendoti in quello stato / avendoti visto in quello stato

on seeing you / having seen you in that state

per finirla / per averla finita

to finish it / through having finished it

vistolo / arrivatoci / una lettera riferentesi al caso (R3)

having seen it / having arrived there / a letter referring to the case

eccomi / eccotelo

here I am / here it is for you (here you are).

Note that **loro** follows all verbs forms and is never attached, e.g.:

vedo loro / parlo loro / per capir(e) loro

NOTE the following crystallized forms which now only appear in notices and formal communications:

Vendesi, Affittasi, Cercasi; Vendonsi (OR **Vendesi**) appartamenti

For sale, For rent, Wanted; Apartments for sale

With first and second person imperatives, the pronouns are attached to the verb in the affirmative, e.g.:

Parlami / Ditemi cosa volete / Diciamoglielo!

In the negative, the pronoun usually follows the verb but in R1–2 may precede it, e.g.:

Non preoccuparti OR **Non ti preoccupare****Non parlatene** OR **Non ne parlate****Non scoraggiamoci** OR **Non ci scoraggiamo!**

With third person imperatives, since these are subjunctives, the pronouns always precede the verb, e.g.:

Si accomodi / Non si disturbi / Mi dica!

In a verb + gerund construction, the pronouns usually precede the finite verb, but may follow and attach to the gerund, e.g.:

Lo sto finendo in questo momento OR **Sto finendolo in questo momento.**

In a modal verb (**dovere, potere, sapere, volere**) + infinitive construction, the pronouns may either precede the finite verb or follow and attach to the infinitive (they may not come between finite verb and infinitive). In formal registers the pronouns tend to attach to the infinitive, but in informal conversation the choice is free. Note that if the modal is emphasized, the pronouns attach to the infinitive. If there are two pronouns, they must not be split, except with impersonal **si**, e.g.:

Ci dobbiamo alzare presto OR **Dobbiamo alzarci presto****Te ne voglio parlare** OR **Voglio parlartene****Lo devo poter fare** OR **Devo poterlo fare** OR **Devo poter farlo****Si può farlo** OR **Lo si può fare.**

With other verbs that take a following infinitive, the pronoun follows the infinitive, but with some verbs it may precede the finite verb in informal registers, e.g.:

Non riesco a leggerlo**Vado a prendertelo** OR **Te lo vado a prendere****Stiamo cercando di orientarci** OR **Ci stiamo cercando di orientare.**

When the infinitive is a reflexive verb, the position of the pronoun affects the choice of auxiliary: **essere** if it precedes the verb, **avere** if it follows the infinitive (cf section 22.6), e.g.:

Ci siamo dovuti alzare presto OR **Abbiamo dovuto alzarci presto****Si è cominciata a preoccupare** OR **Ha cominciato a preoccuparsi.**

With verbs of perception, the pronoun always goes with the main verb if it is the subject of the infinitive, but can be in either position if it is the object, e.g.:

L'ho sentito cantare.

I heard him singing OR I heard it being sung.

Ho sentito cantarlo.

I heard it being sung.

Non voglio sentirlo cantare OR Non lo voglio sentir cantare.

I can't hear him singing OR I can't hear it being sung.

Therefore with verbs of perception two pronouns may be split, e.g.:

Ti ho sentito cantarlo.

I heard you singing it.

Ho sentito cantartelo.

I heard it being sung to you.

Te l'ho sentito cantare.

I heard you singing it OR I heard it being sung to you.

With certain verbs only one position is possible. With causative **fare** and **lasciare**, the pronoun precedes the main verb, e.g.:

Li hai fatti cadere?

Did you let them fall / drop them?

Gli hai fatto perdere l'entusiasmo.

You made them lose enthusiasm.

and with **sembrare** and **parere**, the pronoun is attached to the infinitive, e.g.:

Sembra capirlo.

Pareva svegliarsi.

16.5 Pronouns of address

In modern Italian, the following pronouns are used for addressing another person or persons:

Singular: **tu, Lei, voi, Ella** (R3)

(**Lei** and its derived forms **La**, **Le** are often written today without the capital letter; **Ella** always has the capital; **voi** is sometimes written with a capital, especially in commercial Italian where it refers to the organization being addressed rather than a specific individual.)

Plural: **voi, Loro**

(**Loro** is always written with the capital letter, **voi** never.)

The Italian expression for *to use tu/voi/Lei* is **dare del tu/voi/Lei**. The most important distinction is between **tu** and **Lei** when speaking to one person. Usage is changing rapidly and varies according to personal background and taste, but some general rules can be given. The use of **tu** in place of **Lei** is spreading.

Tu is used universally in the following situations:

- speaking to children, animals, God, and saints (though some traditional prayers to Mary use **voi**);
- to express intimate or familiar relationships, e.g. between relatives of the same generation, to younger relatives, between friends;
- to express solidarity or some common bond between individuals, either age, social class, occupation, activity, etc. Thus **tu** is very widely used among young people, in all situations; between workmates and colleagues; to priests;
- talkback radio, magazine columns which answer letters from readers;
- instructions and questions from computers and other machines to humans (the infinitive is also used).

Lei is used:

- to express courtesy to strangers in formal situations, e.g. those serving the public in shops and offices;
- to students at university (while **tu** is used throughout school);
- to express respect to older persons and those in positions of authority or respect, e.g. university professors (nowadays this often depends on the personality of the professor), priests;
- people with whom one has a relationship which, however cordial and long-standing, is not intimately personal or familiar.

Voi, used to one person, is disappearing but still survives especially in the Center and the mainland South. It is used as a mark of respect to persons with whom one is, nevertheless, on familiar or intimate terms, e.g. older relatives, priests, shopkeepers in one's village or suburb.

Ella is used only on extremely formal, public occasions. Adjectives and participles tend to be in the feminine.

Pronoun usage in most cases is reciprocal, i.e. both interlocutors use the same pronoun. The only usual exceptions to this involve a clear difference in social status and age.

Tu is usually associated with the use of a person's given name, and **Lei** with use of a person's title and/or last name. However there are many possible combinations of **tu/Lei** with first name/last name/title, expressing multiple dimensions of social relationships, e.g.:

- colleagues who do not know each other particularly well may use **tu** but call each other by their surname;
- a woman who employs a cleaning lady may call the cleaning lady by her first name while the cleaning lady calls her **Signora** + first name, and they may both use **Lei**;
- journalists and politicians may be on first-name terms and use **tu** privately, but when in the media they may use **Lei** to each other while the politician may use the journalist's last name and the journalist may use the politician's title or last name or both.

In the plural, **voi** is used in almost all situations today, even when the persons being addressed would receive **Lei** individually. **Loro** has a somewhat antiquated feel.

17 Comparison

17.1 Comparison of inequality (*more/less/fewer than*)

Usage varies somewhat in the use of **di** and **che**.

17.1.1 Nouns and pronouns

If two nouns or pronouns are compared and one of them comes before the verb, **di** is used. This usually means that both items are subjects of a verb, expressed or implied, e.g.:

Le riviste sono più/meno care dei giornali.

Magazines are more/less expensive than newspapers.

Mio fratello ha due anni più/meno di me.

My brother is two years older/younger than I/me.

Le nuove banconote sono più/meno belle di quelle vecchie.

The new banknotes are more/less beautiful than the old ones.

If the two nouns or pronouns being compared both come after the verb, **che** is used (though **di** may also be found in this position). This usually means that both items are objects of a verb. Compare the following pairs of sentences:

Mangio più pasta che riso.

La pasta la mangio più del riso.

I eat more pasta than rice.

R1* vulgar or indecent

R1 informal,
colloquial

R2 neutral, unmarked

R3 formal, written

Italian words and
expressions are R2

unless otherwise
indicated. See also

p. 5.

Il vino mi piace più della birra.
Mi piace più il vino che la birra.
 I like wine more than beer.

Il tiramisù è stato più apprezzato della torta.
E' stato più apprezzato il tiramisù che la torta.

The tiramisù was appreciated more than the cake.
 When **più** goes with the second item being compared, **di** is more usual than **che**, e.g.:

Mangio la pasta più del riso.
Mi piace il vino più della birra.
Più della torta è stato apprezzato il tiramisù.

Note the following two sentences. The first compares one item with another in terms of some characteristic they have in common (both items are “subjects”). The second compares two characteristics of one item (both characteristics are “objects”):

La biblioteca ha più libri della libreria.
 The library has more books than the bookshop.
La biblioteca ha più libri che riviste.
 The library has more books than magazines.

Note also the use of **di** and **che** in the following pair of sentences (in the first sentence, the two items being compared are subjects and in the second they are objects):

Matteo li conosce meglio di Chiara.
 (= **Matteo li conosce meglio di quanto non li conosca Chiara.**)
 Matteo knows them better than Chiara (does).
Matteo li conosce meglio che Chiara.
 (= **Matteo li conosce meglio di quanto lui non conosca Chiara.**)
 Matteo knows them better than (he knows) Chiara.

When the nouns are preceded by a preposition, **che** is always used, e.g.:

In Italia ho visto più chiese che in Spagna.
Ho passato più tempo in Italia che in Francia.

17.1.2 Other parts of speech

When the comparison involves any other part of speech but nouns and pronouns, **che** is used, e.g.:

Lui è meno arrabbiato che dispiaciuto.
 He is less angry than hurt.
Meglio nudi che in pelliccia.
 Better naked than wearing fur.
Meglio tardi che mai.
 Better late than never.
C'è più gioia nel dare che nel ricevere.
 It is more blessed to give than to receive.
Fumare è più dannoso che bere.
 Smoking is more harmful than drinking.

NOTE if infinitives are preceded by articles and are thus treated as nouns, they behave as nouns, e.g.:

Il fumare è più dannoso del bere.

Note the use of **più che** at the beginning of a clause in the following:

Più che un semplice documentario, il film si presenta come un racconto fantastico.

Rather than just a documentary, the film comes across as a tale of fantasy.

In R3 **non** may be used after **che**, e.g.:

Parlò più per necessità che non per disposizione naturale.

He spoke more out of necessity than because of natural disposition.

Note these expressions:

L'ho visto più di tre volte.

I've seen it more than three times.

Più chiaro di così non si può.

It couldn't be clearer than that.

Più che altro non voglio fare brutta figura.

More than anything I don't want to look silly.

Oggi ho lavorato meno di ieri.

Today I have worked less than yesterday.

Ti amo più che mai.

I love you more than ever.

17.1.3 Alternatives to **di/che**

Both **di** and **che** can sometimes be replaced by **rispetto a, nei confronti di**, etc.:

Rispetto al fratello, è molto più indipendente.

Compared to her brother, she is much more independent.

17.2 Comparison of equality

Comparing nouns: **tanto/altrettanto** (R2–3) . . . **quanto** . . .

Questo paese non ha tante case quante l'altro.

This village doesn't have as many houses as the other.

Questo paese ha tanti palazzi quante chiese.

This village has as many palaces as churches.

I palazzi sono tanti quante sono le chiese.

There are as many palaces as there are churches.

Note the use of partitive **ne** in the following:

Ci sono tanti tipi di pizza quanti ce ne sono di formaggio.

There are as many types of pizza as there are of cheese.

Comparing adjectives: **tanto** . . . **quanto** (**che**, R1–2) . . . ; **così** . . .

come . . . ; **altrettanto** . . . **quanto** (**che**, R1–2) . . . ; the first element is often not used.

Questo ragazzo mi sembra (tanto) intelligente quanto suo fratello.

Questo ragazzo mi sembra (così) intelligente come suo fratello.

This boy seems to me as intelligent as his brother.

Questo stile è altrettanto conosciuto in Italia quanto (che, R1–2) all'estero.

This style is as well-known in Italy as abroad.

(E') bianco come la neve.

(It's) as white as snow.

17.3 Comparison involving a clause

When the second element of a comparison is a clause, the following constructions are used:

di quello che / di come + indicative (subjunctive less common)

di quanto non + subjunctive (R2–3)

di quanto + indicative (less common)

che non + subjunctive (R3)

E' più alto di quello che pensavo.

E' più alto di quanto non pensassi (R2–3)/di quanto pensavo.

E' più alto che non pensassi (R3).

He's taller than I thought.

Note the use of partitive **ne** in the following:

Ha perso più azioni di quante ne ha acquisite.

He lost more shares than he acquired.

When two clauses are directly correlated: **più . . . (e) più . . . ; meno . . . (e) meno . . .**

Più la sento parlare (e) più sono convinto che ha ragione.

The more I hear her talk, the more I am convinced she is right.

Più siamo, meglio è.

The more the merrier.

Quanto più le vicende sono gravi, tanto più c'è bisogno di soluzioni originali (R2–3).

The more serious the events, the greater the need for original solutions.

17.4 Superlatives

“Relative” superlatives are identical in form to comparatives. When they are used with a noun, the definite article is not used with the adjective in modern Italian. However, when the noun is understood, or when the superlative is an adverb (and thus no noun is involved), the article is used, e.g.:

Ha comprato il gelato più grande possibile.

She bought the biggest possible ice-cream.

Un uomo, il più anziano di tutti, ci venne incontro.

A man, the oldest of them all, came towards us.

Risponderò il più presto possibile.

I will answer as soon as possible.

After a superlative, the preposition **di** is used, but if the noun is plural **tra/fra** may also be used, e.g.:

E' il più grande del mondo.

It's the biggest in the world.

Lei era la più preparata di/fra tutti.

She was the best prepared of them all / among them all.

The following construction is R2–3 and does not strictly express the idea of superlative but simply emphasizes the quality of the item in question. In the negative it is decidedly ironic:

Abbiamo assistito a uno spettacolo dei più strani.

We witnessed a most strange show.

Non è stata un'idea delle più brillanti.

It wasn't one of the most brilliant ideas (= It was not a good idea at all).

“Absolute” superlatives are formed by adding **-issimo** to adjectives, adverbs or, in a few cases, nouns, e.g.: **caldissimo, amatissimo;**

prestissimo, sicurissimamente; ingambissimo (R1–2, = **molto in gamba**); **il campionissimo, augurissimi**. Such adjectives are used as normal adjectives, usually after the noun, e.g.:

Ha comprato un gelato grandissimo.

She bought a very big ice-cream.

17.5 Irregular comparatives and superlatives

A number of adjectives form their absolute superlative in irregular ways which derive from Latin, e.g. celebre – **celeberrimo**. Such forms are characteristic of R3.

A number of common adjectives have both regular and irregular forms of the comparative and superlative:

più buono OR **migliore**; **buonissimo** OR **ottimo**

più cattivo OR **peggiore**; **cattivissimo** OR **pessimo**

più grande OR **maggiore**; **il più grande** OR **il maggiore** OR **il massimo**

più piccolo OR **minore**; **il più piccolo** OR **il minore** OR **il minimo**

The pairs of forms are generally interchangeable, except for the following:

- figurative meanings occur more often with the irregular forms
un fratello maggiore, un fratello più grande
an older brother, an older/taller brother
- **più buono**: of persons means “good-natured,” of things it means good to eat or drink, e.g.:

Questo ragazzo è il più buono della classe.

This boy is the best-natured in the class.

E' il più buon prosciutto crudo che abbia mai mangiato in vita mia.

It's the best Parma ham I have ever eaten in my life.

In R1–2 **meglio** is often used instead of **migliore**. This usage should not be imitated, e.g.:

Per le notizie economiche, questo giornale è meglio di quello.

For economic news, this newspaper is better than that one.

Other irregular comparatives, of Latin origin, are often used with a generic, “independent” meaning and retain their comparative meaning only in R3. They are **anteriore**, **esteriore**, **inferiore**, **interiore**, **posteriore**, **superiore**, **ulteriore**, e.g.:

Dormiva sul sedile posteriore della macchina.

He was asleep in the back seat of the car.

La data sull'assegno è posteriore a quella effettiva (R3).

The date on the cheque is after/after than the actual one.

Some of these irregular comparatives also have irregular superlative forms, some of which retain a superlative meaning, e.g. **estremo**, **infimo**, **sommo/supremo**, **ultimo**, while others have lost it, e.g. **intimo**. But these and many other words which, strictly speaking, cannot be modified can acquire the superlative ending, especially in informal registers (cf. colloquial English expressions like “very unique”), e.g.: **ultimissimo** “absolutely last”; **finalissima** “grand final.”

18 Word order

Word order is flexible in Italian, more flexible in many ways than in English. Changes in word order are not random but reflect differences in meaning or emphasis. These may at times be subtle, but are important to the message being communicated.

In general, Italian uses word order for stylistic effects, where English often relies on effects of the voice (in writing, these are shown by italics and other conventions). One important principle is that new or important information is normally placed at the *end* of the sentence in Italian, and other elements will be arranged accordingly.

18.1 Subject and verb

The subject usually comes before the verb:

Il mio computer ha un guasto.

My computer has a fault.

There is often nothing in front of the verb in Italian. With transitive verbs and other verbs that take **avere**, this is because the subject can be omitted if it is clear from the verb ending or the context:

Ho visto Luigi ieri. Sta meglio dell'ultima volta che l'ho visto.

I saw Luigi yesterday. He is better than the last time I saw him.

Subjects often come after the verb. This is common in the following cases:

- (i) if the subject is emphasized:

Rispondo io!

I'll get it (i.e. the telephone)!

R1* vulgar or indecent

R1 informal,
colloquial

R2 neutral, unmarked

R3 formal, written
Italian words and
expressions are R2
unless otherwise
indicated. See also
p. 5.

Qui comando io.*I'm the boss around here.***Hanno vinto i candidati alternativi.***The alternative candidates have won.*

- (ii) if the subject is long, especially if the verb is short and/or generic in meaning:

E' stata una nottata movimentata, come sa chi ci ha seguito*(from a TV news broadcast).**It has been a busy night, as those who have been watching us know.*

- (iii) with verbs that take **essere**, if the verb presents a new fact or state of affairs:

E' successo qualcosa.*Something has happened.***Sono aumentate le tasse su tutti i beni di consumo.***Taxes on all consumer goods have gone up.***Sono state identificate le persone responsabili.***The people responsible have been identified.***Si sono verificati incidenti preoccupanti.***Worrying incidents have occurred.*

- (iv) with verbs such as **piacere**, **mancare**, **bastare**, etc., without a direct object (cf. section 4.4):

Mi piacciono tutte le opere di Verdi.*I like all Verdi's operas.***Ci manca la tua voce.***We miss the sound of your voice.***Mi fanno male i piedi.***My feet hurt.*

- (v) with non-finite verbal constructions:

stando così le cose*things being as they are/were***arrivati gli ultimi ospiti***once the last guests had arrived***visti i documenti***after the documents have/had been viewed*

Note that several set expressions with non-finite verbs place the subject first, e.g.:

tempo permettendo*weather permitting***tutto sommato***all things considered.*

18.2 Subject, verb, and object

With verbs that take an object, various word orders are possible.

- (i) *Moving the object to the left (i.e. the beginning of sentence or clause)*
Object and subject can be inverted. This has the double effect of introducing the object as the “topic” of the sentence, and giving special

prominence to whatever is put at the end of the sentence (usually the subject). This inversion is very common in speech, since it allows speakers to emphasize whichever elements of the sentence they wish.

In R3, the inversion can be done without any other changes to the sentence.

Preoccupazioni puristiche – nel senso ottocentesco del termine – la Crusca non ebbe (M. Cortelazzo).

The Crusca Academy did not have puristic concerns in the nineteenth-century sense of the term.

In R1 and R2, objects that are moved “to the left” are usually recapitulated by a pronoun, e.g.:

Gli spaghetti li ha fatti mia nonna.

My grandmother made the spaghetti.

This is very much like saying

Gli spaghetti sono stati fatti da mia nonna.

OR

E' mia nonna che ha fatto gli spaghetti.

Consider also these examples:

La legge non l'ho fatta io (Manzoni).

It wasn't me that made the law.

Don Fabrizio quella sensazione la conosceva da sempre (Tomasi di Lampedusa).

Don Fabrizio had *always* known that sensation.

A me non mi piace (R1–2).

I don't like it.

In R1 an indirect object is sometimes moved to the left without its preposition. The repeating pronoun makes the meaning clear. This is usually considered ungrammatical, e.g.:

Quel signore, Dio gli ha toccato il cuore (Manzoni, direct speech in *I Promessi Sposi*) = **A quel signore, Dio (gli) ha toccato il cuore.**

That man, God has touched his heart/God has touched that man's heart.

Chi ha, gli sarà dato (C. Pavese) = **A chi ha, (gli) sarà dato.**

To him that has, shall be given.

Chiara, non le ho mica detto niente (R1).

I didn't say anything to Chiara.

The following construction is R1 and usually considered ungrammatical:

Mangiare, mangio poco.

As for eating, I don't eat much.

- (ii) *Moving the object to the right (i.e. to the end of the sentence or clause)*

An object can also be “moved to the right.” The “repeating” pronoun actually comes first, which has the effect of isolating the object at the end of the sentence. Often a pause before the object makes it seem almost an afterthought to remind the listener of the topic at hand (which the speaker assumes was common knowledge to start with). The emphasis is on what precedes this moved object, often the verb. This construction has a feeling

of informality about it and conveys some familiarity between speaker and listener. It is confined to speech and should be used with care.

Lo vuole un caffè?

Do you want a coffee?

Lo porto domani, il dolce.

As for the sweet, I'll bring it tomorrow.

Non bisogna farla chiacchierare la gente (G. Verga).

You mustn't make people gossip.

(iii) *Cleft sentences*

The English equivalent is *It is x who is doing y*. The Italian construction is very widely used in speech and there are important differences between the English and Italian constructions.

E' Matteo che ha tirato la coda al gatto.

E' stato Matteo a tirare la coda al gatto.

It was Matteo who pulled the cat's tail.

Sono io che te lo dico = Sono io a dirtelo.

It's me telling you/I'm the one who's telling you.

Sei tu che devi chiedere scusa.

You're the one/It's you who has to apologise.

E' lì che voglio arrivare.

That's where I want to get to.

E' per questo che non mi piace.

That's why I don't like it.

Quand'è che parti per il Canada?

When is it that you are leaving for Canada?

18.3 Verbs, objects, and adverbs

As a rule the adverb immediately follows the verb in Italian. To give it particular prominence it may be moved to other positions in the sentence, especially before the verb. Note the shift in emphasis between the two clauses in the following sentence:

Lei gli prese innocentemente la mano, Candide

innocentemente baciò la mano di lei (Sciascia).

Long, modified or 'heavy' adverbs may, as in English, follow the object, e.g.:

Lei parla bene l'italiano.

She speaks Italian well.

Lei parla molto bene l'italiano (normal order) OR

Lei parla l'italiano molto bene (greater emphasis).

She speaks Italian very well.

Lei parla l'italiano con grande sicurezza.

She speaks Italian with great confidence.

The adverb **anche** comes immediately before the item it refers to. Note the effect of the change of position in the following:

Anche Eugenio scrive poesie in italiano (as well as some other person).

Eugenio anche scrive poesie in italiano (as well as reading them).

Eugenio scrive anche poesie in italiano (as well as novels).

Eugenio scrive poesie anche in italiano (as well as English poems).

18.4 Noun and adjective

All adjectives in Italian can, in theory, come before or after a noun. However, the difference in position always carries a difference in meaning. In many cases this is a subtle nuance of emphasis or style associated with a particular register, but in others the difference is between distinct concepts and would require different words in English.

The basic position for adjectives is after the noun. Here they perform their essential function – to describe something and restrict the meaning of the noun. When adjectives come before nouns, they acquire a more rhetorical flavour and may express metaphorical meanings.

One adjective

An adjective after a noun adds information that helps to identify the noun in question, often by contrasting it with other possible or potential nouns. An adjective before a noun gives additional information of a subjective nature about the noun: it tells us something about the noun that the speaker wants us to know but which is not crucial for identifying the noun in question, e.g.:

un racconto triste

a story whose most salient characteristic (for the speaker) is that it is sad

un triste racconto

a story that happens to be sad (among other possible attributes).

All adjectives follow the noun if they have some other element depending on them, e.g.:

un racconto triste da ricordare

a story [that is] sad to recall

Connotations of a following position

Some adjectives are almost always distinctive. They express nationality, color, religious or political affiliation etc., e.g.:

un cittadino canadese, il vino rosso, un paese musulmano, il deputato radicale

These adjectives sometimes lose any “distinctive” force and precede the noun. **Il Manzoni cattolico** refers to Alessandro Manzoni *after* his conversion to Catholicism, as opposed to his earlier, anticlerical period. To say **il cattolico Manzoni** is to assume the reader knows that Manzoni was a Catholic and alludes to this fact as part of a particular interpretation.

Connotations of a preceding position

- (i) When the adjective is an “expected” attribute, e.g.:
con enormi difficoltà
 with enormous difficulty
 This is often used for stylistic effect, e.g.:
**Capo Vaticano: suggestivo promontorio da dove si gode la
 magnifica vista dell’intero panorama della costa tirrenica
 calabrese** (travel brochure)
- (ii) When adjective and noun make a familiar or set phrase, e.g.:
cari saluti
 kind regards (at the end of a letter)
un leggero aumento nel costo della vita
 a slight increase in the cost of living
- (iii) Certain adjectives usually come before the noun. These adjectives are very common and express generic value judgments:
bello, brutto, buono, cattivo
 They may come before the noun even when superlative, but must follow the noun when modified by an adverb, e.g.:
una bella festa
una bellissima festa OR **una festa bellissima**
una festa molto bella
una festa piuttosto bella
- (iv) Adjectives usually precede infinitives used as nouns, e.g.:
il suo lento spostarsi
 its slow movement
un continuo sentirsi debole
 a continual feeling of weakness

Change of meaning with change of position

A certain number of adjectives have different meanings before and after nouns. In line with what has been said above, when these adjectives come after a noun they express their more usual, literal and simpler meaning. When they come before a noun, they express metaphorical and more nuanced meanings.

alto	pressione alta alta pressione	<i>high pressure (of blood)</i> <i>high pressure (of atmosphere or gas)</i>
barbaro	i soldati barbari i barbari soldati (R3)	<i>the Barbarian soldiers</i> <i>the barbaric soldiers</i>
buono	un uomo buono un buon uomo	<i>a good-natured man</i> <i>a decent chap, a good guy</i>
caro	un ristorante caro una cara trattoria	<i>an expensive restaurant</i> <i>a lovely trattoria</i>
certo	una notizia certa una certa notizia	<i>a reliable piece of news</i> <i>a certain piece of news</i>

distinto	persone distinte distinte persone idee distinte distinte idee	<i>distinguished persons</i> <i>various persons</i> <i>distinct ideas</i> <i>various ideas</i>
diverso	colori diversi diversi colori	<i>different colors</i> <i>several colors</i>
dolce	l'acqua dolce del lago la dolce acqua del lago (R3)	<i>fresh water (not salty)</i> <i>the sweet water of the lake</i>
grande	un uomo grande un grande uomo	<i>a large man</i> <i>a great man</i>
numeroso	famiglie numerose numerose famiglie	<i>large families</i> <i>many families</i>
nuovo	Mi sono comprato una macchina nuova Mi sono comprato una nuova macchina	<i>(the car is brand new)</i> <i>(the car may be old but it replaces my previous one)</i>
povero	un ragazzo povero povero ragazzo! il mio povero nonno	<i>a poor child</i> <i>poor (= unfortunate) child!</i> <i>my late grandfather</i>
proprio	un nome proprio il proprio nome	<i>a proper noun</i> <i>one's own name</i>
puro	il vino puro la pura verità	<i>unadulterated wine</i> <i>only the truth</i>
santo	quella donna santa quella santa donna!	<i>that holy woman</i> <i>that blessed woman!</i>
semplice	Non preoccuparti: è una domanda semplice Non preoccuparti: è una semplice domanda	<i>(a simple question)</i> <i>(just a question)</i>
solo	per donne sole per sole donne	<i>for single or unaccompanied women</i> <i>for women only</i>
stesso	il ragazzo stesso lo stesso ragazzo	<i>the boy himself</i> <i>the same boy</i>
unico	un unico volume è un libro unico	<i>one single volume</i> <i>it's a unique book</i>
vario	ragioni molto varie varie persone	<i>very varied reasons</i> <i>various/several persons</i>
vecchio	un amico vecchio un vecchio amico	<i>a friend who is old</i> <i>a friend of long standing</i>
vero	Questa è una commedia vera. Questa è una vera commedia!	<i>This is a factual play.</i> <i>This is a real comedy!</i>

More than one adjective

A noun can be modified by a number of adjectives in two ways. If each adjective adds separate information, they are separated by commas and the word **e**. If the adjectives are descriptive or subjective as mentioned above, they may come before the noun, e.g.:

un programma lungo, noioso e scemo

a stupid, boring, long program

una rapida e positiva soluzione

a quick, positive solution

If each new adjective adds further restriction by modifying what comes before it, they are added without punctuation, e.g.:

la sfera mobile celeste

the celestial mobile sphere

la Comunità economica europea (= CEE)

the European Economic Community (= EEC)

un impatto emotivo terribile

a terrible emotional impact

Adjectives are added to the right. (In English they are added to the left.) However, if the series gets long, a new adjective, that would have gone at the end of the list, can be added *before* the noun, e.g.:

un'università pubblica italiana

an Italian public university

un'università pubblica italiana famosa OR

una famosa università pubblica italiana

a famous Italian public university

18.5 Numerals and altro

i primi due anni, gli ultimi due anni

the first two years, the last two years

i due primi anni, i due ultimi anni

the two initial years, the two final years

molti altri ragazzi, pochi altri ragazzi

many other young people, a few other young people

altri due ragazzi

two more young people

Dammi un altro dieci-venti minuti! (R1)

Give me another ten or twenty minutes!

19 Negation

19.1 No

No is used to answer questions, both alone and in certain phrases:

Avrai il tempo per uscire stasera?

-No, non credo.

-Credo di no / Temo di no / Spero di no / Mi sembra di no / Direi di no

I don't think so / I am afraid not / I hope not / I don't think so / I would say not

Perché no?

Why not?

No is also used in sentences to sum up a negative alternative:

Ma vuoi venire o no?

But do you want to come or not?

Dimmi se ti piace o no (Note the R1–2 alternative: **Dimmi se ti piace o meno**).

Tell me if you like it or not.

If **no** applies to one particular word, it usually follows that word, e.g.:

Tommaso è d'accordo, ma Elena no.

Tommaso agrees, but Elena doesn't.

Andrei volentieri al Luna Park, ma con te no (cf. **ma non con te**)

I would gladly go to the Amusement Park, but not with you.

R1* vulgar or indecent

R1 informal,
colloquial

R2 neutral, unmarked

R3 formal, written

Italian words and
expressions are R2
unless otherwise
indicated. See also
p. 5.

Avete tutti ricevuto l'invito? Io no.

Have you all received the invitation? – *I haven't.*

Sono tutti eligibili, studenti e no.

All are eligible, students and non-students.

A common, but less correct, alternative is to use **non**:

Sono tutti d'accordo, politici e non.

All are in agreement, politicians and non-politicians (OR politicians and others).

19.2 Non

An Italian sentence is negated by placing **non** before a verb or auxiliary (and any associated pronouns), e.g.:

Non l'ho fatto io.

I didn't do it.

Non te lo voglio dire / Non voglio dirtelo.

I don't want to tell you.

The “scope” of negation can be limited by placing **non** in front of individual elements, e.g.:

Non tutti sono d'accordo.

Not everyone is in agreement.

Consider these pairs:

Non sono disposto a farlo (= I won't do it)

Sono disposto a non farlo (= I may do it, but may not)

Non posso farlo (= I am not able to do it)

Posso non farlo (= I can avoid doing it)

Non posso crederci.

I cannot believe you

Non posso non crederci.

I cannot but believe you.

With verbs of opinion and intention, moving the **non** does not significantly change the basic meaning, e.g.:

Non vorrei che tu ti preoccupassi.

Vorrei che tu non ti preoccupassi.

I wouldn't want you to worry.

A whole sentence may be negated by **non è che** or **non che** (R2–3).

These expressions usually negate an idea which has been referred to, explicitly or implicitly, in the context, and usually lead to a different or opposing idea being put forward, e.g.:

Non che lui sia cattivo, ma è molto nervoso.

It's not that he's nasty, but he is very touchy.

-Mi hanno detto che Matteo lavora in un ristorante.

-No, non è che lavora in un ristorante, fa il barista nel centro.

-They told me Matteo works in a restaurant.

-No, it's not that he works in a restaurant, he is a barman in the city.

In informal usage, **non è che** is sometimes used simply to negate a whole sentence in a somewhat softer way than **non**, with the subjunctive (R2–3) or the indicative (R1–2). Compare:

Non è molto bello.

He's not very handsome.

Non è che lui sia/è molto bello.

He's not really very handsome.

19.3 Negative pronouns, adjectives, and adverbs

These are **nessuno, niente/nulla, alcuno** (R3), **mai, più, affatto, mica, manco, punto, neanche/neppure/nemmeno, né, né . . . né . . . , non . . . che**.

A negative sentence in Italian must always have one negative item before the verb, even if there are one or more negative words after it. Usually the negative words listed above follow the verb, e.g.:

Non vedo nessuno.

I can't see anyone/I see no one.

Non capisco niente/nulla.

I don't understand anything/I understand nothing.

Non vi è alcuna ragione per crederlo (R3).

There is no reason to believe it.

Non sono mai stato né a Forlì né a Cefalù.

In R1 this would be **Non sono mai stato a Forlì e neanche a Cefalù**.

I have never been either to Forlì or to Cefalù.

Non abito più in quella casa.

I no longer live in that house/I don't live in that house any more.

Non c'era più vino.

There was no more wine.

Non ci tornerò mai più.

I'll never go back there again.

Non è affatto vero.

Non è mica vero (R1).

It's not true at all.

Non ho manco capito (R1).

Non ho punto capito.

I haven't understood at all.

Non ho parlato con lei: non l'ho neanche vista/neppure vista/nemmeno vista.

I haven't spoken to her: I haven't even seen her.

Non l'ho visto né desidero vederlo (R3) (= **e non desidero vederlo**).

I have not seen him nor do I wish to see him.

Non desidero che partire (R3).

(In R1–2 this would be **Voglio solo partire**).

I desire nothing but to depart/I only want to depart.

These negative words may also precede the verb. With **nessuno**, **niente** and **né . . . né. . .**, they may come first if they are subject of the verb but come after the verb for emphasis, e.g.:

Nessuno ha parlato (= **Non ha parlato nessuno**).

No one spoke.

Niente è successo (= **Non è successo niente**).

Nothing happened.

Né io né mia moglie ci siamo andati (= **Non ci siamo andati né io né mia moglie**).

Neither my wife nor I went there.

Mai may precede the verb for emphasis in R2–3, e.g.:

Mai avrei creduto che fosse possibile una tale crudeltà

Never would I have believed that such cruelty was possible.

Mai che abbia un pensiero gentile (cf. section 30.2.8).

He never has a kind thought.

It normally comes first in R1 in Sicily:

Lui disse che mai aveva pensato che . . . (Sciascia)

= **Lui disse che non aveva mai pensato che . . .**

Non . . . punto is Tuscan:

Non ho punto (OR **punta**) **voglio di uscire**.

I have no desire to go out.

Manco is most common in the South, **mica** in the North. In R1 they may be used without a preceding **non**:

E' manco vero (OR **Manco vero**).

E' mica vero (OR **Mica vero**).

It's not true OR Not true.

There are many other reinforcing negatives, usually confined to speech, e.g.:

non ci capisco un'acca, un fico secco (R2), **un cavolo** (R1), **un cazzo** (R1*)

I can't understand a thing, fuck all

Certain negative words can be used elliptically in conversation, e.g.:

Che cosa hai fatto ieri sera? – Niente di particolare.

What did you do last night? – Nothing special.

Mille grazie! – (Di) niente.

Many thanks – It was nothing.

Dammi le chiavi! – Mai (stronger is **Mai e poi mai**).

Give me the keys! – Never.

Ora o mai più.

It's now or never.

La conosci la sorella di Mario? – Mai vista.

Do you know Mario's sister? – Never seen her.

Certain negative words can be used without **non** to have a positive meaning (this is in fact their historically older meaning), e.g.:

Ha chiamato nessuno?

Has anyone called?

Vado a fare la spesa, hai bisogno di niente?

I'm going shopping, do you need anything?

Hai mai sentito parlare delle Arpie?

Have you ever heard of the Harpies?

Se ti ricorderai mai di me, scrivimi.

If you ever remember me, write to me.

Hai più incontrato mia cugina?

Did you meet my cousin again?

Note these R1 uses of **niente**:

Non è vero niente (= non è affatto vero).

It's not true at all.

Non ho niente voglia di uscire.

I have no desire to go out.

Oggi niente ravioli.

No ravioli today.

Senza counts as a negative word in that it can be followed by one or more negative items, e.g.:

Se ne è andato senza dire niente a nessuno.

He left without saying anything to anyone.

19.4 Apparent negatives

Some exclamations and certain types of subordinate clause require **non** although their meaning is positive. The “pleonastic” **non** may be omitted in more informal speech.

Che cosa non hanno fatto gli amici per aiutarlo!

What didn't his friends do to help him!

Chissà che non sia finalmente guarito!

Let's hope he is cured at last!

Io rimango qui finché non mi dirai la verità.

I am staying here until you tell me the truth.

Farò come ho detto, a meno che non ci siano buone ragioni per cambiare progetto.

I will do as I said, unless there are good reasons for changing plans.

E' più alta di quanto non pensassi.

She's taller than I thought.

Il Presidente intervenne per timore che la situazione non peggiorasse (R3).

The President intervened for fear that the situation might deteriorate.

19.5 Negation of single words

Many words can be negated by adding a prefix. Here is a list illustrating the most common prefixes. It is difficult to predict which prefix will be used with a particular word – use a dictionary!

**comodo/scomodo, abile/disabile, felice/infelice,
logico/illogico, morale/immorale, reale/irreale,
normale/anormale, alcolico/analcolico, nobile/ignobile**

Non is used with nouns in R3, especially in bureaucratic language:

non appartenenza; patto di non aggressione

non-belonging; non-aggression pact

Adjectives can be negated with varying degrees of intensity by using **non**,

poco, niente (R1):

un cuore non corrotto

an uncorrupted heart

un'idea poco originale

an unoriginal idea (a not very original idea)

un lavoro niente redditizio (R1, esp North)

a not at all well-paid job.

19.6 Other negative expressions

Italian has a number of set expressions which include **non**:

Non ha detto parola.

She did not say a word.

Non ha aperto bocca.

He did not open his mouth (did not say a word).

Non ha chiuso occhio.

She did not sleep a wink.

20 Periphrases

Italian has a number of verbal constructions with infinitive or gerund, where the main verb has lost its original meaning and has become a marker of the aspect of the verb in the infinitive or gerund.

20.1 Stare + gerund

Usually only present and imperfect (less common with future and conditional). It is known as the “progressive” periphrasis because it emphasizes the ongoing nature of an action in a particular moment of time. However, it is much more limited in its uses than the English progressive tenses. In many situations where English uses a progressive present or imperfect, it is just as common in Italian to use a simple tense. Thus, although this Italian construction is becoming more widely used in Italy, it should not be overused by the learner, since it is only used to make the action more vivid, actual, or relevant to the situation at hand.

Compare:

Che fa Elena? Parla al telefono.

What is Elena doing? She is talking on the telephone.

Non interrompermi: non vedi che sto parlando al telefono?

Don't interrupt me; can't you see I am talking on the phone?

These uses of the English progressive can *not* be translated by **stare** + gerund:

- (i) verbs expressing a state of affairs (**sta essendo** is ungrammatical):

Rosaria abita/vive a Napoli.

Rosaria is living in Naples.

R1* vulgar or indecent

R1 informal,
colloquial

R2 neutral, unmarked

R3 formal, written

Italian words and
expressions are R2
unless otherwise
indicated. See also
p. 5.

If used with a different meaning, the periphrasis may be possible, e.g.:

Chiara sta vivendo un brutto momento.

Chiara is going through a hard time.

- (ii) continuous actions with “for” or “since”:

Studio il pianoforte da dieci anni/da quando avevo otto anni.

I’ve been studying the piano for ten years/ since I was eight.

Aspettava da un’ora quando finalmente sono arrivati.

He had been waiting for an hour when they finally showed up.

- (iii) the future:

Parto domani.

I’m leaving tomorrow.

- (iv) the passive:

La bandiera viene abbassata in questo momento.

The flag is being lowered at this moment.

Stare + gerund may be used to express gradual processes of change:

Il tuo italiano sta migliorando giorno per giorno.

Your Italian is improving day by day.

Stare + gerund may be used to express actions continuing or repeated over a period of time. This usage is colloquial and is most common in parts of the South:

In questi tempi sto lavorando molto.

I’m working a lot these days.

20.2 Stare a + infinitive, essere dietro a + infinitive

All tenses. These constructions are very similar in meaning to **stare** + gerund. **Stare a** is R1–2 and is most common in the South, while **essere dietro a** is R1 and is most common in the North. They may be used to render the English progressive in tenses not allowed by **stare** + gerund. They are not normally used with verbs of motion.

Tommaso ha lavorato a casa per due ore.

Tommaso è stato (dietro) a lavorare a casa per due ore.

BUT NOT **Tommaso è stato lavorando a casa per due ore.**

Tommaso was working at home for two hours.

NOTE this idiomatic variation:

Non stare lì a preoccuparti/disturbarti/alzarti.

Don’t bother worrying/disturbing yourself/getting up.

20.3 Andare + gerund

All tenses. Only higher registers. This expresses a continuing action or series of actions during a period of time, especially where the action has a cumulative effect, e.g.:

Il governo va raccogliendo consensi per il progetto di legge.

The government is gathering support for the bill.

La sala si andava riempiendo di gente.

The room was filling with people.

Negli anni 60 il partito è andato rafforzando i legami con i sindacati.

In the 1960s the party (gradually) strengthened its links with the unions. Sometimes **andare** expresses actual movement and the gerund should be thought of as performing its normal function. Compare:

Va chiedendo le stesse cose a tutti.

He keeps asking everyone the same things.

Va chiedendo soldi in tutte le case del paese.

He is going to all the houses in the village asking for money.

20.4 Venire + gerund

All tenses. This is very similar to **andare** + gerund, but even more elevated in style. Often **venire** preserves some notion of movement, either physically towards the speaker or figuratively towards some end point or person benefiting from the action, e.g.:

La barca si veniva avvicinando alla riva.

The boat was coming towards the shore (implies the speaker is on the shore).

Cf. **La barca si andava avvicinando alla riva.**

The boat was approaching the shore (moving either towards or away from the speaker).

In quei mesi, si veniva creando una situazione di instabilità generale (R3).

In those months, a situation of general instability was coming into being.

21 Verbs of movement

English and Italian express manner and direction of movement in different ways. English tends to use a verb to express *manner* and a preposition to express *direction*. In Italian, the verb normally expresses *direction*, while *manner* is expressed by an adverbial phrase or a gerund. For example:

She RAN *out of the room*
MANNER *direction*

E' uscita dalla stanza DI CORSA/CORRENDO
direction MANNER

Italian:	English:
Verb: direction Phrase: manner	Verb: manner Preposition or phrase: direction
E' tornata in bicicletta.	She cycled/biked back.
E' tornato, zoppicando, in cucina.	He hobbled back to the kitchen.
Ha attraversato il fiume nuotando/a nuoto.	She swam across the river.
Ha attraversato la campagna a piedi.	He walked through the countryside.
Ha salito le scale di corsa.	She ran up the stairs.
Ha sceso le scale in punta di piedi.	He tiptoed down the stairs.
E' entrata di colpo/in fretta.	She burst in.
Si è portato al muro strisciando (per terra).	He crawled to the wall.

Common direction verbs in Italian (cf. chapter 22) are:

**entrare, uscire, salire, scendere, andare, venire, arrivare, partire,
tornare**

Italian has a number of *manner* verbs which can indicate only the movement itself. Such movement, towards a destination, is expressed by a

generic *direction* verb plus an adverbial phrase or a gerund. English often uses one and the same verb in both cases, e.g.:

Ha camminato in centro per un’ora.

He walked in the city center for an hour.

E’ andato in centro a piedi in un’ora.

He walked to the city center in an hour.

Sei venuto/andato/etc. a piedi o in macchina?

Did you walk or drive?

The following table contains common *manner* verbs, with some adverbial phrases typically used to express the same movement when a destination is specified. These *manner* verbs, though intransitive, imply deliberate action by the subject and therefore all take the auxiliary **avere** (cf. section 22.1).

	<i>Manner verbs</i>	<i>Manner phrases</i>
to crawl	strisciare	strisciando, carponi
to cycle	andare etc. in bicicletta	
to drive	guidare	in macchina etc.
to hop/skip	saltellare (cf. saltare, section 22.4)	saltellando
to go on horseback	cavalcare	a cavallo
to limp	zoppicare	zoppicando
to march	marciare	marciando
to sail	navigare, veleggiare	in barca/nave
to ski	sciare	con gli sci
to stroll	passteggiare	passteggiando
to swim	nuotare	a nuoto
to travel	viaggiare	(andare)
to walk	camminare	a piedi

These manner verbs may be used with certain prepositions, such as **attraverso, fino a, lungo**, which express the general direction of the movement rather than a deliberate destination, e.g.:

Hanno passeggiato attraverso i campi.

They strolled through the fields (i.e. not strictly from one side to the other).

Ho camminato fino al centro.

I went for a walk as far as the city center.

Abbiamo guidato lungo la costa.

We drove along the coast.

22 Auxiliary verbs in compound tenses

The choice between **avere** and **essere** is not straightforward in Italian. All transitive verbs take **avere**. All reflexive verbs (cf section 24), and verbs in the passive (cf. section 23), take **essere**. The problem lies with intransitive verbs. Some take **avere**, some take **essere**, and some can take either. In general, **avere** is used with verbs whose subject is involved in performing an act more or less deliberately, whereas **essere** is used where the subject of the verb is seen not so much as performing an action as undergoing an event or being affected by the event.

22.1 Verbs that always take avere

Verbs of “manner of motion” (see chapter 21) take **avere**, e.g.:

camminare	to walk	passaggiare	to stroll
galleggiare	to float	sciare	to ski
marciare	to march	vagare	to wander
navigare	to navigate	viaggiare	to travel
nuotare	to swim		

These include verbs formed by adding a suffix (cf. section 5.3) to verbs which (may) take **essere**, e.g.:

gironzolare	to stroll about
saltellare	to hop, skip
vivacchiare	to get by

R1* vulgar or indecent

R1 informal,
colloquial

R2 neutral, unmarked

R3 formal, written

Italian words and
expressions are R2
unless otherwise
indicated. See also
p. 5.

22.2 Verbs that always take *essere*

Note that where a verb takes **essere**, verbs derived from it will usually also take **essere**, even where the meaning is quite different, e.g. **venire** – **avvenire**, to happen; **intervenire**, to intervene or speak in a debate; **svenire**, to faint; etc. All verbs in this section take **essere** if the prefix **ri-** is added to them.

A number of verbs in this list are often used today with **avere** instead of **essere**, especially in informal registers. They are marked with an asterisk (*).

Verbs expressing change of location

affiorare	to surface	migrare	to migrate
andare	to go	partire	to depart
approdare (*)	to dock (by boat)	rimbalzare (*)	to bounce
arrivare	to arrive	sbucare	to pop out
balzare	to jump	scappare	to escape
cadere	to fall	sdrucchiolare (*)	to slide
ALSO		sgorgare	to pour forth
decadere,	to decay,	slittare (*)	to slip
scadere	to expire (i.e. fall due)	sopraggiungere	to arrive, turn up
cascare	to fall	sorgere	to rise
circolare (*)	to circulate	tramontare	to set (of the sun)
crollare	to collapse	trapelare	to leak (lit and fig)
defluire	to flow down	tornare	to return
deragliare (*)	to derail	uscire	to go out
entrare	to enter	ALSO	
espatriare (R2–3)	to expatriate	riuscire	to succeed
fuoriuscire (R3)	to come out	venire	to come
giungere	to reach	ALSO	
immigrare	to immigrate	avvenire	to happen
inciampare (*)	to trip over	intervenire	to intervene
indietreggiare (*)	to move backwards	pervenire	to arrive
insorgere (R2–3)	to rise up	provenire	to originate
		svenire	to faint

Verbs expressing change of condition

ammuffire	to grow mouldy	divampare (R2–3)	to flare up
appassire	to wilt	diventare	to become
arrossire	to blush	divenire (R2–3)	to become
avvampare (R2–3)	to flare up	emergere	to emerge
crepare (R1–2)	to die	esondare (*) (R2–3)	to overflow (river etc.)
decrescere	to diminish	evolvere	to evolve
degenerare (*)	to degenerate	fiorire	to flower, flourish
deperire (R2–3)	to waste away	franare	to crumble
		impallidire	to grow pale

impazzire	to go mad	scaturire (R2–3)	to gush, (fig) to ensue
imputridire (R2–3)	to go rotten	schiantare (R1–2)	to die
marcire	to rot	scoppiare	to explode
morire	to die	sfiorire	to wither
nascere	to be born	sfociare (*) (R2–3)	to flow out
perire (R3)	to perish	smottare	to slide (e.g. landslide)
sbocciare	to blossom	straripare (*)	to overflow (river etc.)
sbottare	to burst out	subentrare (a qu)	to succeed (sb)

Verbs expressing continuation of a condition

permanere (R3)	to remain	rimanere	to remain
persistere	to persist	sopravvivere	to survive
restare	to remain		

Verbs expressing happening

accadere	to happen	decorrere (R3)	to pass (of time)
avvenire	to happen	risultare	to turn out
capitare	to happen by chance	succedere	to happen

Verbs expressing being, existing, and various states of being

campare (R1–2)	to live	giacere	to lie
consistere	to consist	luccicare (*)	to glitter
costare	to cost	prevalere (*)	to prevail
dipendere	to depend	rassomigliare (*)	to resemble
eccellere (*)	to excel	sedere	to sit
equivalere (*)	to be equivalent	stare	to be
esistere	to exist	sussistere	to subsist
essere	to be		

Verbs expressing attributes of persons or things, often having “to be” in their English translation (cf. section 4.4)

abbisognare (R3)	to be necessary	premere	to be urgent
bastare	to be enough	rincrescere	to regret
bisognare	to be necessary	spiacere	not to please
dispiacere	not to please	spettare	to be up to sb
dolere (R3)	to cause sorrow	toccare	to befall
giovare (*)	to be of use	valere	to be worth
importare	to be important	volerci	to be required
piacere	to please		

Verbs expressing seeming, appearing, disappearing

apparire	to appear	sparire	to disappear
comparire	to appear	scomparire	to disappear
parere	to appear	svanire	to vanish
sembrare	to seem		

Verbs expressing the emission of sound

These verbs, all R2–3 except **squillare**, take both auxiliaries with no perceptible difference of meaning or register. For **suonare**, see section 22.4.

echeggiare (*)	to echo	rintronare (*)	to boom out
rimbombare (*)	to boom out	squillare (*)	to ring (e.g. telephone)
risuonare (*)	to resound		

Verbs of weather and atmospheric phenomena

Although official usage indicates **essere**, **avere** is very widely used today with these verbs. **Essere** is often considered to be high register or typical of central Italian usage.

abbuiare (R3)	to turn dark	piovere (*)	to rain
annottare (R3)	to become night	nevicare (*)	to snow
balenare (R3)	to lighten (of sky)	sgelare (see also section 22.4)	to thaw
fioccare (*)	to snow	spiovere (see also section 22.4)	to stop raining
gelare (see also section 22.4)	to freeze	tuonare (*)	to thunder
grandinare (*)	to hail		
lampeggiare (*)	to flash (of lightning)		

When used to refer to things other than the weather:

piovere (R2–3) takes **essere**, e.g.:

Gli sono piovute addosso disgrazie a non finire.

No end of bad luck poured down on him.

But **lampeggiare** and **tuonare** take **avere**, e.g.:

Il semaforo dev'essere rotto: ha lampeggiato tutta la notte.

The traffic light must be broken: it flashed all night.

Il predicatore ha tuonato contro il malcostume generale (R3).

The preacher railed against the widespread immorality.

22.3 Verbs that take either according to grammatical construction

While the basic meaning of these verbs remains the same, they take **avere** when used transitively, and **essere** when used intransitively.

(i) *Verbs expressing motion*

discendere, montare, salire, scendere, e.g.:

Abbiamo salito/sceso le scale.

We climbed up/down the stairs.

Siamo saliti/scesi per le scale.

We came up/down by the stairs.

(ii) *Verbs expressing beginning, continuing, ceasing*

cessare, cominciare, continuare, finire, incominciare, iniziare,

proseguire (BUT see section 22.4), **seguire, seguitare, terminare**, e.g.:

Il direttore ha iniziato il concerto con un discorso.

The conductor began the concert with a speech.

Il concerto è iniziato alle otto in punto.

The concert began at eight on the dot.

They take **avere** when followed by an infinitive (even one that would take **essere**), e.g.:

Gli ospiti hanno continuato ad arrivare per tutto il pomeriggio.

The guests kept arriving all afternoon.

However, **cominciare** may take **essere** (in R2–3) when used with a verb that takes **essere**, especially if the subject comes after the verb, e.g.:

Sono cominciati a volare insulti.

Insults began to fly.

(iii) *Verbs expressing living*

vivere: avere when transitive; **essere** when intransitive (also **avere** in R1–2), e.g.:

La nonna ha vissuto una vita coraggiosa.

The grandmother lived a courageous life.

La nonna è vissuta (ha vissuto) in modo coraggioso.

The grandmother lived courageously.

NOTE **convivere** to *cohabit* usually takes **avere**.

(iv) *Verbs which form transitive/intransitive pairs*

In many cases the object of the transitive verb is the same as the subject of the corresponding intransitive verb (in English, these pairs may be expressed by the same verb, or by two different verbs; in these cases the transitive meaning is given first), e.g.:

L'esperienza ha invecchiato mio padre di dieci anni.

The experience aged my father by ten years.

In quel momento mio padre è invecchiato di dieci anni.

At that moment my father aged by ten years.

Il viaggio in Italia ha migliorato il tuo italiano.

The trip to Italy has improved your Italian.

Il tuo italiano è migliorato grazie al viaggio in Italia.

Your Italian has improved thanks to your trip to Italy.

affogare	to drown
affondare	to sink
annegare	to drown
appoggiare	to lean
ALSO reflexive, esp for persons;	
arrostiti	to roast
assordare	to deafen/go deaf
atterrare	to land
aumentare	to increase
avanzare	to advance; have/be in excess
bruciare	to burn
calare	to drop

cambiare	to change
colare a picco (see also section 22.4)	to sink (of a ship)
crescere	to grow
derivare	to derive
dimagrire	to make thin/become thin (lose weight)
diminuire	to diminish
esplodere	to explode
filtrare	to filter
girare (*)	to turn
guarire	to cure/get better
imbiancare	to whiten
imbianchire	to whiten
ingrandire	to make large/become large
ingrassare	to fatten/become fat
ingrossare	to make large/become large
insospettire	to make suspicious/become suspicious
intimidire	to make timid/become timid
invecchiare	to age
lievitare (*)	to leaven/rise
maturare	to mature
migliorare (see also section 22.4)	to improve
mutare (R2–3)	to change
passare (see also section 22.4)	to pass (of time)
peggiore (see also section 22.4)	to worsen
pesare (*)	to weigh
precipitare (R2–3)	to precipitate
raddoppiare	to double
retrocedere (R2–3)	to push back/move back
ribassare	to lower
NOTE abbassare is only transitive	
rincarare	to increase, heighten
ringiovanire	to make/get young (again)
risuscitare	to revive
rotolare	to roll
salpare	to weigh (anchor)
sbarcare	to disembark
sbiadire	to fade
sbiancare	to make white/turn white
schizzare	to spray
scorrere	to read quickly/flow
scurire	to make dark/grow dark

ALSO reflexive

sfogare to give vent to/pour forth

ALSO reflexive, esp for persons

sfumare to tone down/disappear**soffriggere** to fry lightly**sporgere** to protrude**sprizzare** to spray**sprofondare** to throw down/fall**stillare** (R2–3) to ooze, exude**trascorrere** to pass (of time)**variare** (see also section 22.4) to vary

There are many verbs that used to have this transitive/intransitive usage but nowadays tend to be used in the reflexive to express the intransitive meaning (cf. section 24.5). The past participle with **essere** is usually felt more as an adjective, e.g.:

Abbiamo cotto la pasta.*We cooked* the pasta.**La pasta si è cotta per otto minuti precisi.**The pasta *cooked* for eight minutes exactly.**La pasta è cotta: tutti a tavola!**The pasta *is cooked*: everyone to the table!

This trend seems to be spreading. For the following verbs it is well established:

accorciare to shorten**accrescere** to increase**aggravare** to make/become more serious**ammalare** to make/fall ill**arricchire** to make/become rich**arrugginire** to rust**asciugare** to dry**calare** to drop**chiarire** to clarify**cuocere** to cook**fondere** to melt, to fuse**gelare** to freeze (as a weather verb, see section 22.2)**gonfiare** to enlarge**imbrunire** to make/become dark**impaurire** to frighten**inasprire** to make/become harsh**indebolire** to weaken**ingelosire** to make/become jealous**muovere** to move**prosciugare** to dry up

rinfrascare	to refresh
rinforzare	to reinforce
ringiovanire	to rejuvenate
riscaldare	to warm
sbigottire	to dismay
schiarire	to clear up
scottare	to burn
sgelare	to thaw (as a weather verb, see section 22.2)
sgonfiare	to deflate
soffocare	to suffocate
spianare	to level
stupire	to amaze
susseguire (R3)	to follow on

One verb with three distinct usages is **sfollare**. As a transitive verb, it means *to clear (a place of people)*; as intransitive with **essere**, it means *to disperse*; as a reflexive, it means *to (become) empty*.

La polizia ha sfollato il teatro.

The police cleared the theatre.

La gente è sfollata senza panico.

The people dispersed without panic.

Il teatro si è sfollato rapidamente.

The theater emptied quickly.

22.4 Verbs that take either according to meaning

These verbs are intransitive, except in certain special uses. They take **avere** or **essere** in accordance with changes of meaning.

(i) *Certain verbs of movement*

correre, emigrare, saltare, volare: **avere** when manner of motion verbs (cf. chapter 21); **essere** when change of location verbs; **essere** in figurative usage, e.g.:

Il maratoneta ha corso a Roma / È corso a Roma.

The marathon runner ran (a race) in Rome / He ran to Rome.

Ha emigrato negli anni 50 / È emigrata in Australia.

She emigrated in the 1950s / She emigrated to Australia.

Ha saltato per la gioia / È saltata dalla finestra.

She jumped for joy / She jumped out the window.

Non ho mai volato con l'Alitalia / Sono volato in banca prima che chiudesse.

I've never flown Alitalia / I rushed to the bank before it closed.

Sono corso/volato a prendere il treno.

(implies I caught the train by running).

Ho corso/volato per prendere il treno.

(implies I ran, in order to catch the train, but the outcome is ambiguous; cf. section 27.5.1).

NOTE: **correre** and **saltare** take **avere** when transitive, e.g.:

Abbiamo corso molti rischi nel venire qua.

We have run many risks in coming here.

Ho saltato il pranzo perché avevo da fare.

I skipped lunch because I was busy.

NOTE: *verbs derived from correre*:

accorrere, decorrere, incorrere, intercorrere, occorrere, ricorrere always take **essere**;

concorrere, discorrere are intransitive and always take **avere**;

percorrere, precorrere, rincorrere, ripercorrere, soccorrere are transitive;

scorrere and **trascorrere** (cf. section 22.3) take both, e.g.:

Ho scorso rapidamente il giornale.

I skimmed the newspaper.

Il traffico è scorso bene per l'intero periodo festivo.

Traffic flowed well for the entire holiday period.

(ii) *Human vs non-human subject*

Some verbs tend to take **avere** when the subject is a human person (or sometimes an animal), and **essere** when the subject is an inanimate object, e.g.:

Il paziente ha (OR è) peggiorato da ieri sera.

The patient has worsened since last night.

La situazione economica è peggiorata.

The economic situation has worsened.

abortire	to abort/have a miscarriage
appartenere	to belong
fallire	to fail/go bankrupt
migliorare (see also section 22.3)	to improve
peggiore (see also section 22.3)	to worsen
procedere (see also below)	to proceed
progredire	to progress
proseguire (see also section 22.3)	to continue
variare (see also section 22.3)	to vary

(iii) *Verbs of emission of liquid or smell:*

A number of verbs may take **avere** when the subject is the container or source of the emission, and **essere** when the subject is the thing being emitted, e.g.:

Il lago ha evaporato quest'estate.

The lake evaporated this summer.

L'alcol è evaporato durante la cottura.

The alcohol evaporated during the cooking.

colare	to drip, ooze
NOTE for colare a picco , see section 22.3.	
emanare	to emanate
evaporare	to evaporate
gocciolare	to drip
profumare	to perfume
scolare	to drain
sgocciolare	to drain, drip
traboccare	to overflow
tracimare	to overflow

NOTE **spiovere** takes only **essere** when meaning *to pour down* (cf. section 22.2).

A similar verb is **abbondare**, which often takes **avere** when the subject is the person or thing which has something in abundance, **essere** when the subject is the thing in abundance, e.g.:

Abbiamo abbondato (la dispensa ha abbondato) di provviste.

We had (the pantry had) plenty of provisions.

I viveri sono abbondanti durante il viaggio.

The food was plentiful during the trip.

(iv) *Various other verbs*

convenire: **avere** meaning *agree*; **essere** meaning *to behove/suit*, or *to congregate* (R3), e.g.:

Abbiamo convenuto sul prezzo.

We agreed on the price.

Il prezzo mi è convenuto.

The price suited me.

durare: **avere** for durability of an object; **essere** of an event, e.g.:

Queste scarpe hanno durato molto a lungo.

These shoes have lasted a long time.

Il film è durato due ore.

The film lasted two hours.

ALSO **Ho durato fatica a risolvere il problema** (R3).

I labored hard to solve the problem.

evadere, fuggire, sfuggire: **avere** meaning *to avoid or evade*; **essere** meaning *to escape*, e.g.:

È diventato un orso: ha (s)fuggito anche gli amici più cari.

He has become unsociable (lit. “a bear”): he has avoided even his dearest friends.

Secondo i giornali, avrebbe evaso le tasse per anni.

According to the papers, he is alleged to have evaded his tax for years.

L’abbiamo visto in piazza, ma è (s)fuggito senza salutarci.

We saw him in the piazza, but he fled without saying hello.

incrudelire (R3): **avere** meaning *to act cruelly*, **essere** meaning *to become cruel*, e.g.:

Il tiranno ha incrudelito contro la popolazione intera.

the tyrant was cruel to the whole population.

Il tiranno è incrudelito in seguito alla rivolta popolare.

The tyrant grew cruel following the popular uprising.

interessare: **avere** meaning *to concern, affect*; **essere** meaning *to be of interest*, e.g.:

Il problema ha interessato tutta una generazione di giovani.

The issue affected a whole generation of young people.

Gli sono interessate tutte le questioni ambientali.

All the environmental issues interested them.

mancare: **avere** meaning *to miss, or to fail in an obligation* (cf. section 22.7); **essere** meaning *to be missing, to lack*, e.g.:

Ho mancato la porta di poco.

I just missed the goal.

Mi sei mancata.

I missed you.

Lei è mancata a scuola per tre giorni.

She was not at school for three days.

passare: **avere/essere** for meanings to do with time (see section 22.3); **essere** meaning *to go past*, e.g.:

Sono passato davanti a casa tua.

I passed in front of your house.

ALSO **ripassare**: **avere** meaning *to review*; **essere** meaning *to pass by again*

procedere: **avere** meaning *to progress*; **essere** meaning *to behave*, e.g.:

Ha proceduto da persona onesta.

He behaved like an honest person.

È proceduto notevolmente.

He has progressed considerably.

scampare: **avere** meaning *to avoid or to save*; **essere** meaning *to survive*, e.g.:

Ha scampato il pericolo per fortuna.

She avoided the danger through good luck.

È scampata al massacro in cui è perita tutta la sua famiglia.

She survived the massacre in which her whole family perished.

scattare: **avere** meaning *to take (a photograph)*; **essere** meaning *to jump or leap into action*, e.g.:

Abbiamo scattato tante foto del Foro.

We took lots of photos of the Forum.

Siamo scattati in piedi quando è entrato il Presidente.

We jumped to our feet when the President came in.

schiantare: **avere** meaning *to break*; **essere** meaning *to die* (R1–2), e.g.:

Il vento ha schiantato le cime degli alberi.

The wind snapped off the tops of the trees.

Siamo schiantati dalle risate.

We died laughing.

scivolare: avere or **essere** when referring to physical movement; **essere** with the figurative meaning of *slipping away/through one's fingers etc.*, e.g.:

Ho scivolato sul ghiaccio.

I slipped on the ice.

Sei scivolato via e non si è accorto nessuno.

You slipped away and no one noticed.

Il bicchiere mi è scivolato tra le mani.

The glass slipped through my hands.

servire: avere meaning *to provide service*; **essere** meaning *to be useful*, e.g.:

Ha servito a tavola in casa di nobili.

He served at table in a noble house.

Il suo consiglio non è servito proprio a niente.

His advice was no use at all.

sfilare: avere meaning *to take by stealth*; **essere** meaning *to file past*, e.g.:

Ti hanno sfilato il portafoglio dalla tasca.

They sneaked your wallet from your pocket.

Sono sfilati in corteo.

They filed past in a procession.

suonare: avere when subject is person or thing making sound, or resounding (also **essere**, R3); **essere** when subject is a fact announced by a sound, e.g.:

Ha suonato il telefono.

The phone rang.

Le sue parole hanno suonato (ALSO sono suonate) nell'aula vuota.

His words resounded in the empty hall.

È appena suonato mezzogiorno.

Midday has just rung.

avere when transitive, meaning *to play an instrument etc.*, e.g.:

Io ho suonato il violino quando ero a scuola.

I played the violin when I was at school.

22.5 Modal verbs

The modal verbs **dovere**, **potere**, **volere** take **avere** if the following infinitive is a verb that takes **avere**. If the verb that follows takes **essere**, the modals may take **essere** (R2–3) or **avere** (R1–2). This may also occur with **sapere** but only in higher registers, e.g.:

Abbiamo dovuto/potuto/voluto dormire all'aperto.

We had to/could/wanted to sleep in the open.

Siamo dovuti/potuti/voluti partire presto (R2–3).

Abbiamo dovuto/potuto/voluto partire presto (R1–2).

We had to/could/wanted to leave early.

If the infinitive is **essere** or in the passive, the auxiliary is **avere**, e.g.:

Avrebbe dovuto essere qui a quest'ora.

She should have been here by now.

If the modal verb is emphasized or used without a following infinitive, **avere** is used, e.g.:

Nonostante tutto, ha dovuto partire.

Despite everything, she *had to* (was obliged to) leave.

Non voleva partire, ma ha dovuto.

She didn't want to leave, but she had to.

22.6 Pronouns and auxiliaries

With modal verbs the position of a pronoun determines choice of auxiliary in two ways:

- (i) **ci, ne** (cf. section 16.4)

Non ci sono potuto andare (NOT **Non ci ho potuto andare**)

Non ho potuto andarci (ALSO **Non sono potuto andarci**)

I wasn't able to go there

Non ne sono potuto uscire (NOT **Non ne ho potuto uscire**)

Non ho potuto uscirne (ALSO **Non sono potuto uscirne**)

I wasn't able to get out of there

- (ii) With reflexives

Mi sono dovuto svegliare (NOT **Mi ho dovuto svegliare**)

Ho dovuto svegliarmi (NOT **Sono dovuto svegliarmi**)

I had to wake up

NOTE: this is similar to the way that pronoun position affects normal auxiliary choice with reflexive verbs (see section 24.1):

Ho vestito me stesso (e poi i bambini) *vs* **Mi sono vestito**

I dressed myself (and then the children) *vs* I got dressed

NOTE: **cominciare** can act in the same way as modal verbs with reflexives:

Si è cominciato a spostare OR **Ha cominciato a spostarsi**

It started to move.

23 The passive

The Italian passive, like the English passive, is a construction which focusses attention on the object of an action (for the passive with **si**, see section 24.6). The direct object of a transitive verb becomes the subject of the passive. The passive with **essere** may be used in all tenses and moods, and with modals:

Le innovazioni caravaggesche furono adottate da artisti di molti paesi.

Caravaggio's innovations were adopted by artists in many countries.

Credo che le prenotazioni siano già state chiuse.

I think bookings have already been closed.

Questa proposta potrebbe essere riformulata per la prossima riunione.

This proposal could be reworked for the next meeting.

23.1 Passive with **venire**

The passive may be formed with **venire** instead of **essere** to express an action rather than a state. This often avoids the ambiguity of **essere** + past participle, which may express a passive event, or may describe a state with the participle acting as adjective. **Venire** may be used as auxiliary only in the simple tenses, indicative and subjunctive, i.e. present, imperfect, *passato remoto*, future, and conditional, and is most often used with the third person. It is characteristic of R2–3, e.g.:

La mostra viene aperta alle 4.

The exhibition is being/gets opened at 4 o'clock.

R1* vulgar or indecent

R1 informal,
colloquial

R2 neutral, unmarked

R3 formal, written

Italian words and
expressions are R2
unless otherwise
indicated. See also
p. 5.

La mostra è aperta alle 4.

The exhibition is open (OR is being opened) at 4 o'clock.

23.2 Passive with *andare*

The passive formed with **andare** expresses obligation or opportuneness. This only occurs with the simple tenses, i.e. present, imperfect, future, and conditional, but not *passato remoto*. It is only found in the third person, in all registers:

Il modulo va riempito in ogni sua parte.

The form must be completed in all sections.

La pasta andava tolta prima.

The pasta should have been taken off (the heat) sooner.

The agent is not usually expressed with the **andare** passive. If an agent is to be expressed with a passive involving obligation, **dovere** is used, e.g.:

Il modulo deve essere riempito dal genitore o chi ne fa le veci.

The form must be completed by the parent or guardian.

Andare is also used as an alternative to **essere**, and without any notion of obligation, with a few verbs expressing a negative result such as loss or damage, e.g. **perdere**, **disperdere**, **smarrire**, **distruggere**, **dimenticare**, **deludere**, **bruciare**, **spendere**, etc. This occurs in all tenses, e.g.:

Il manoscritto andò perduto nel Cinquecento.

The manuscript was lost in the sixteenth century.

Molti quadri sono andati distrutti durante la guerra.

Many paintings were destroyed during the war.

23.3 Passive with *rimanere* and *restare*

The passive may be formed with **rimanere** or **restare** with a small number of verbs expressing surprise, e.g.:

Nel sentire la notizia, siamo rimasti sorpresi/delusi/interdetti.

On hearing the news, we were surprised/disappointed/dumbfounded.

23.4 Expression of the agent

The agent is preceded by **da** (although in the majority of passive sentences, no agent is indicated). If the passive action is expressed by a noun or adjective, the agent is preceded by **da parte di**, e.g.:

La prospettiva fu usata da Brunelleschi.

Perspective was used by Brunelleschi.

L'uso della prospettiva da parte di Brunelleschi fu l'inizio dell'arte rinascimentale.

The use of perspective by Brunelleschi was the beginning of Renaissance art.

Queste condizioni non sono accettabili da parte dei (O R dai) sindacati.

These conditions are not acceptable by/to the unions.

23.5 Indirect objects

Unlike in English, an indirect object in Italian cannot become the subject of a passive verb, but must remain indirect, e.g.:

A Giuseppe sono stati mandati i risultati sbagliati.

Giuseppe was sent the wrong results.

Le è stato chiesto di parlare delle sue esperienze in Italia.

She has been asked to speak about her experiences in Italy.

23.6 Other ways of expressing the passive

The passive is found more often in higher registers. In informal speech, other ways of placing the emphasis on the object are preferred. These include using a “marked” word order, such as moving the object to the left, i.e. to the normal position of the subject, or using a cleft sentence (see section 18.2). Compare:

Gli spaghetti sono stati fatti da mia zia.

Gli spaghetti li ha fatti mia zia.

E’ mia zia che ha fatto gli spaghetti.

An impersonal subject may be used (see section 24.9). Compare:

A Giuseppe sono stati mandati i risultati sbagliati.

A Giuseppe hanno mandato i risultati sbagliati.

24 Reflexives and impersonals

The Italian reflexive has many different functions, some of which are not paralleled in English. Reflexive verbs always take the auxiliary **essere**, except in the case mentioned in section 24.1. The reflexive pronoun is omitted when the reflexive verb is an infinitive depending on **fare** or **lasciare**, e.g.:

Lo hanno fatto pentire (not pentirsi) delle sue parole.

They made him regret his words.

24.1 Direct reflexives

Most transitive verbs can be used reflexively when subject and object coincide. Direct reflexives are usually defined as taking unstressed reflexive pronouns (before the verb) and **essere** in compound tenses. However, they may also take stressed pronouns (cf. chapter 16): these follow the verb, and **avere** is used (cf. section 22.6), e.g.:

Mi sono vestito / Ho vestito i bambini (e poi me stesso).

I (got) dressed / I dressed the children (and then myself).

24.2 Indirect reflexives

The reflexive pronoun is an indirect object and expresses greater involvement in the action by the subject. This is increasingly common in R1–2. In compound tenses, the past participle agrees with the subject (or with the object, R3):

R1* vulgar or indecent R1 informal, colloquial R2 neutral, unmarked R3 formal, written Italian words and expressions are R2 unless otherwise indicated. See also p. 5.

Chiara si è mangiata (or **mangiato**, R3) **un bel piatto di spaghetti.**

Chiara had (herself) a lovely plate of spaghetti.

The participle agrees with a direct object if it is a preceding pronoun, e.g.:

I biscotti, se li è mangiati Emilia.

The biscuits, it was Emilia who ate them up.

An indirect reflexive is the usual way of expressing possession of parts of body or items of clothing, e.g.:

Elena si è rotta un braccio/si è messa il cappotto.

Elena broke her arm/put on her coat.

Some verbs have an indirect reflexive form which carries a subtle but perceptible change of meaning, in terms of greater involvement by the subject. This usage seems to be increasing in R1–2.

approfittare (di)	to take advantage (of)	approfittarsi (di)	to take advantage (of), esp in negative sense
incontrare	to meet	incontrarsi (con)	to have a meeting with
sbagliare	to make a mistake	sbagliarsi	to err, be in the wrong
sedere	to be seated	sedersi	to sit down

Several verbs of motion and state can be similarly “intensified” through the addition of **se + ne**; cf. section 4.5.2.

24.3 Reciprocal reflexives

In the plural, the reflexive can express reciprocal actions. Ambiguity between direct and reciprocal reflexives can be removed through expressions such as **reciprocamente**, **a vicenda**, **scambievolmente**, **l’un l’altro**, **gli uni con gli altri**, etc.:

I prigionieri si accusavano del delitto.

This could mean “The prisoners accused each other of the crime”
OR “The prisoners accused themselves of the crime.”

I prigionieri si accusavano a vicenda del delitto.

The prisoners accused each other of the crime.

24.4 Inherent reflexives

A number of verbs exist only in the reflexive form and in most cases there is nothing particularly reflexive about their meaning. They are all intransitive, e.g.:

accorgersi (di)	to notice
arrendersi	to surrender, give oneself up
avvalersi (di) (R2–3)	to make use (of)
congratularsi (con qu)	to congratulate (sb)
imbattersi (in)	to come across, run into

impadronirsi (di)	to take possession of, master (sth)
lagnarsi (di)	to complain (of/about)
pentirsi (di)	to repent, regret
ribellarsi (a)	to rebel (against)
suicidarsi	to take one's own life
vergognarsi (di)	to be ashamed (at/of)

24.5 The reflexive as marker of the intransitive

The reflexive form is used simply as the intransitive counterpart of many transitives. This usage appears to be growing (cf. section 22.3), e.g.:

abbattere	to knock down	abbattersi	to lose heart
accostare	to put near	accostarsi	to approach
addormentare	to put to sleep	addormentarsi	to fall asleep
allontanare	to push away	allontanarsi	to move away
alzare	to raise	alzarsi	to get up
annoiare	to bore	annoiarsi	to get bored
arrabbiare	to enrage	arrabbiarsi	to get angry
avviare	to set in motion	avviarsi	to set out
avvicinare	to move near (tr)	avvicinarsi (a)	to approach
deprimere	to depress	deprimersi	to get depressed
destare (R2–3)	to waken	destarsi (R2–3)	to wake up
fermare	to stop (tr)	fermarsi	to stop (intr)
gonfiare	to inflate	gonfiarsi	to swell up
guastare	to damage	guastarsi	to break down
imbarcare	to take on board	imbarcarsi	to go on board
infiammare	to inflame	infiammarsi	to catch fire (fig)
invogliare	to attract	invogliarsi (di) (R3)	to take a fancy (to)
irritare	to irritate	irritarsi	to become irritated
meravigliare	to surprise	meravigliarsi	to wonder
muovere	to move (tr)	muoversi	to move (intr)
offendere	to offend	offendersi	to get offended
rasserenare	to calm (tr)	rasserenarsi	to become calm (again)
rattristare	to sadden	rattristarsi	to become sad
rendere conto (di)	to give an account of	rendersi conto (di)	to realize
ritirare	to withdraw (tr)	ritirarsi	to withdraw (intr)
rivolgere	to turn (tr)	rivolgersi	to turn to (intr)
scoraggiare	to discourage	scoraggiarsi	to become discouraged
spaventare	to frighten	spaventarsi	to become frightened
stancare	to tire (tr)	stancarsi	to get tired
stupire	to amaze	stupirsi	to be amazed
svegliare	to waken	svegliarsi	to wake up
trattenere	to hold back	trattenersi	to hold oneself back
voltare	to turn (tr)	voltarsi	to turn (intr)

Some verbs have three possible constructions, e.g. **dimenticare**, **ricordare**, **scordare**, **sposare**. The reflexive as intransitive requires a preposition. The meaning of these groups of sentences is essentially the same, e.g.:

Ha sposato un'italiana (transitive).

Si è sposato un'italiana (R1–2) (indirect reflexive).

Si è sposato con un'italiana (reflexive as intransitive).

24.6 The passive reflexive

In the third person, the reflexive may be used to express the passive. With the **si** passive, the agent is not usually expressed: the **essere** passive is used for that, cf. chapter 23. The verb agrees with the grammatical subject and the auxiliary in compound tenses is always **essere**, e.g.:

Qui si parla italiano.

Italian (is) spoken here.

In Italia si parlano molti dialetti.

Many dialects are spoken in Italy.

Si sono vendute mille copie del suo primo cd.

1000 copies of her first CD were sold.

The rules for verb agreement and auxiliary choice also apply with modal verbs, e.g.:

Si sono dovuti ristampare tutti i biglietti.

All the tickets had to be reprinted.

24.7 The impersonal reflexive with transitive verbs

The passive use of the reflexive often merges with an impersonal meaning. As before, verb agreement is compulsory and the auxiliary is **essere**, e.g.:

Non si possono accettare lettere anonime.

One cannot accept anonymous letters

(OR Anonymous letters cannot be accepted).

Non si è mai vista una cosa simile.

One has never seen anything like this

(OR Nothing like this has ever been seen).

I risultati si sono visti subito.

One saw the results immediately.

The position of **si** may suggest either a passive or an impersonal meaning, e.g.:

Questo si può capire facilmente.

One can understand this easily.

Questo può capirsi facilmente.

This can be understood easily.

The fact that the impersonal **si** looks like the subject of the verb means that the verb could agree with **si** in older Italian, but today only in R1, e.g.:

Si vede tante cose strane in questi giorni.

You see many strange things these days.

When the subject of an impersonal reflexive is a pronoun, it takes the form of an *object* pronoun and precedes the **si**. The verb is always in the singular, but a past participle agrees with the object pronoun, e.g.:

Non ti si vede in giro in questi giorni.

One doesn't see you around these days.

Le albicocche? Le si compra in primavera.

Apricots? One buys them in spring.

Le albicocche? L'anno scorso le si è comprate tutta la primavera.

Apricots? Last year one bought them all spring.

An impersonal reflexive may combine with any other reflexive (direct, indirect, reciprocal or inherent). To avoid **si si**, the first **si** becomes **ci**, e.g.:

ci si alza; ci si fa un bel caffè; ci si saluta; non ci si accorge di niente

one gets up; one makes oneself a nice coffee; everyone greets each other; one notices nothing.

24.8 The impersonal reflexive with intransitive verbs

The use of **si** with intransitive verbs can only be interpreted as impersonal, since there can be no passive meaning. The verb is always singular, e.g.:

Si viaggia bene in prima classe.

One travels well in first class.

Any adjective or noun referring to the **si** is in the masculine plural (or feminine plural if reference is exclusively to females). This is most common with **essere**, **stare**, **diventare**, but it applies with any intransitive verb, e.g.:

si è giovani; si dorme tranquilli; si vive contenti

one is young; one sleeps peacefully; one lives happy (OR happily)

si è donne; si è vedove; si è incinte

one is (a) woman; one is a widow; one is pregnant

In fact, adjectives and nouns referring to any impersonal expression are in the masculine plural, e.g.:

La città è bella d'agosto: basta non essere soli.

The city is beautiful in August: just make sure you're not alone.

Bisognerebbe essere sognatori più spesso.

One should be a dreamer more often.

E' impossibile non essere attratti dalla sua forte personalità.

It is impossible not to be attracted by his strong personality.

In compound tenses, the ending of the participle depends on the type of verb:

- (i) The participle ends in **-o** if the verb normally takes **avere**, e.g.:

Si è lavorato per tre giorni su questo problema.

One worked on this problem for three days.

The participle ends in **-i**, or **-e**, as with adjectives and nouns above, if the verb normally takes **essere**. This includes:

- (ii) intransitive verbs which take **essere** (cf. section 22.2)

si è usciti presto; si è stati in casa

one got out early; one remained in the house

- (iii) passive of transitive verbs

si è ammirati; si è ammirate

one is admired; a woman is admired

- (iv) reflexives

ci si è vergognati; ci si sente stanchi

one felt ashamed; one feels tired

The impersonal reflexive is used in place of the first person plural in Central Italy, especially Tuscany, and occasionally elsewhere (R1–2):

Si va? Ci si vede domani!

Andiamo? Ci vediamo domani!

24.9 Other impersonal subjects

Other ways of expressing a general, impersonal subject are: **uno, tu** (which may even be used – with care – when using the **Lei** form of address), or use of the third person plural, e.g.:

Quando uno è fatto così, non c'è niente da fare.

When someone is like that, there is nothing to be done.

Quando ti trovi in quella situazione lì, non capisci niente.

When you find yourself in that situation, you don't understand a thing.

Hanno licenziato il Presidente.

They have sacked the President OR The President has been sacked.

24.10 Impersonal objects

Impersonal **si** can never be used as an object. It may be replaced by **ci** (R2–3) or **ti** (R1–2), e.g.:

Si è felici se ci scrivono (R3).

One is happy if they write to one.

Se ti beccano senza documento, sei fregato (R1).

If they catch you without ID, you're in trouble.

In more elevated styles, an impersonal object may be omitted altogether.

Usually an English translation must include an object, e.g.:

Questo esperimento permette di verificare le ultime ipotesi.

This experiment allows one/us to test the latest hypotheses

OR This experiment allows the latest hypotheses to be tested.

With “impersonal verbs,” which usually use an indirect object pronoun to indicate the logical subject (cf. section 27.2.1), impersonal reference is achieved by omitting a pronoun altogether, e.g.:

Sembra di mangiare cartone.

It's like eating cardboard (lit It seems [to one] to eat cardboard).

THE SENTENCE – combining clauses

25 Italian prepositions

Italian grammars traditionally divide prepositions into two groups. The “preposizioni proprie” are, in order of frequency of use, **di, a, da, in, con, su, per, tra/fra**. Of these, **a, da, di, in, su** are always articulated when used with the definite article (i.e. combine with it to produce *alla, della*, etc.). In modern Italian, **per** and **tra/fra** are no longer articulated. **Con** is only usually articulated in speech, and usually R1–2. The “preposizioni improprie” were originally adverbs and in modern Italian can be used as prepositions or adverbs: e.g. **contro, davanti, dietro, sotto, sopra**. They are never articulated.

25.1 a

In modern Italian **a** becomes **ad** usually only before another word beginning with **a**, but higher registers continue the tradition of using **ad** before words beginning with any vowel.

ad alta voce, ad (or **a**) **Ancona** (all registers)

ad Empoli, ad Imola, ad Otranto, ad Udine (R2–3)

25.1.1 Basic meanings

- (a) *destination, direction; generally corresponds to English to*

vado al ristorante, vado a Roma

I’m going to the restaurant, I’m going to Rome

- (b) *location; corresponds to English at or in*

sono a casa, abitano a Milano

They are at home, they live in Milan

- (c) *point in time*

alle due; a mezzogiorno

at two o’clock; at midday

R1* vulgar or indecent R1 informal, colloquial R2 neutral, unmarked R3 formal, written Italian words and expressions are R2 unless otherwise indicated. See also p. 5.

25.1.2 Expressing time

alle due del mattino	at two in the morning
all'alba	at dawn
a mezzogiorno/mezzanotte	at midday/midnight
all'inizio del mese/dell'anno	at the beginning of the month/ year
alla fine del mese/anno	at the end of the month/year
a vent'anni/all'età di vent'anni (R3)	at twenty years of age
allo/nello stesso tempo	at the same time
ai nostri tempi	nowadays
ai tempi dei comuni	in the time of the communes
a prima vista	at first sight
a domani/presto/dopo	see you tomorrow/soon/later
al cessare della musica	when the music ended

25.1.3 Expressing rate (= distribution, price, and measure)

a uno a uno	one by one
a decine/dozzine/centinaia	by the ten/dozen/hundred
uno alla volta	one at a time
due volte alla settimana (cf. per)	twice a week
a giorni alterni	on alternate days
lo vende a un euro all'etto	she sells it at one euro per 100 grams
lo vende a buon mercato	she sells it cheaply
vendere al dettaglio/all'ingrosso	to sell retail/wholesale
a (una velocità di) cento chilometri all'ora	at 100 km an hour (60 mph)
pagare a rate	to pay in instalments

25.1.4 Expressing manner

a bocca aperta	open-mouthed
alla bolognese/milanese/ napoletana	in the style of Bologna/Milan/ Naples
all'italiana	in the Italian style
fare alla romana	to go Dutch, pay one's own way
spaghetti al sugo/ragù	spaghetti with tomato sauce/ ragout
gelato al cioccolato	chocolate ice-cream
gelato alla frutta	fruit ice-cream
cuocere a fuoco lento	to cook over a slow heat
a ogni costo/a tutti i costi	at any cost
giocare a carte	to play cards
prendere qc alla leggera	to take sth lightly
a lungo	for a long time

a modo mio	in my own way
alla maniera di Caravaggio	in Caravaggio's style
BUT: in modo/maniera elegante	in an elegant manner
alla moda	in fashion
è alla moda	it/he/she conforms to current fashion
BUT: è di moda	it is in fashion/in vogue
a memoria	by heart
a passo d'uomo	at a walking pace
a mio parere/avviso	in my opinion
a mio modo di vedere	the way I see things . . .
al contrario/all'inverso	on the contrary, the opposite way, vice versa
alla rovescia/al rovescio/ a rovescio	upside-down, back to front, inside out, the wrong way
conto alla rovescia	count-down
a ritroso/all'indietro	backwards
a spese mie	at my expense
a bassa voce/ad alta voce	in a low/loud voice
a quattro zampe	on all fours
a tutta velocità	at full speed
a tutto gas, a tutta birra (R1)	flat out, at full speed
a tu per tu/a quattr'occhi	face to face

25.1.5 Expressing place

all'equatore	at/on the equator
ai Tropici	in/to the Tropics
al polo nord	at/to the north pole
all'orizzonte	on/to the horizon
a casa/a casa di Maria	(at) home/at /to Maria's place
al telefono	on the telephone
al sole	in the sun
all'aperto	in the open air
al fresco	open-air (R1 = in jail)
al fresco della sera	in the cool evening air
all'ombra	in the shade
alla radio/televisione	on the radio/TV
a bordo di	on board
a metà strada	half-way there
a/in contatto con	in contact with
al collo	around one's neck
a destra/sinistra	on/to the right/left
alle spalle (di qu)	behind sb's back
ferito a una mano/gamba	wounded in one hand/leg
si guardò allo specchio	he looked at himself in the mirror

alla luce di	in the light of (lit and fig)
a tavola	at the table
a livello letterario	on the literary level
alla/sulla riva del mare	at the seashore
suonare una canzone al pianoforte	play a song on the piano
a letto	in bed
a teatro/scuola	at/to the theater/school
NOTE ALSO the general expression of distance from something:	
essere a (due chilometri) da (casa mia)	
to be (two kilometres) from (my place)	

25.1.6 Expressing kind

un sacco a pelo	a sleeping-bag
una bomba a mano	a hand grenade
un dipinto a mano	a hand-drawn design
una villa a due piani	a two-storey villa
una barca a remi/vela	a row/sail boat
pantaloni a zampa d'elefante	flared trousers
una nave a vapore	a steamship
rapina a mano armata	armed hold-up

25.1.7 Expressing instrument

andare a piedi	to go on foot, to walk
chiudere a chiave	to lock
fatto a mano/macchina	made by hand/machine
scrivere a macchina	to type
a cavallo/cavalluccio	on horseback/piggy-back

25.1.8 Adverbial idioms with a

stare a proprio agio	to be at one's ease
a bruciapelo	point-blank
alla cheticella	stealthily
alla cieca	blindly
piove a dirotto/a catinelle	it's raining cats and dogs
alla grande (R1)	big-time
vivere alla grande	to live like a king
alla mano	easy-going
alla meglio/alla bell'e meglio	one way or another
agli occhi di qu	in sb's eyes
al potere	in power
a rigore	strictly speaking
a vista d'occhio	in the blink of an eye
a volo d'uccello	with a bird's-eye view, as the crow flies

e' stato il primo/ etc./ultimo a farlo	he was the first/ etc./last to do it
al verde	in the red, broke
a casaccio	random
a che serve?	what is it for?
agli arresti domiciliari	under house arrest

25.1.9 “Personal” a (a with direct object)

In R1–2 speech, **a** is often used before a pronoun direct object which is moved to the beginning of a sentence for emphasis, e.g.:

A noi chi ci paga? (= **Chi paga noi?**)

Who will pay *us*?

A is also used before a direct object which is an animate being, especially human. This usage is confined to the South and is R1, e.g.:

Tommaso chiama a Chiara (= **Tommaso chiama Chiara**)

25.1.10 Complex prepositional expressions with **a**

all'altezza di	on a level with, abreast of (fig)
essere all'altezza del compito (fig)	to be equal to the task
a causa di	because of
a cura di	prepared by, (of books) edited by
a differenza di	unlike
a/in favore di	in favor of
a fianco di	alongside
a furia di	by dint of
a guisa di	by way of
a lato di	by the side of
a livello di	at the level of
a nome di	on behalf of
a partire da	starting from (a point in time)
a proposito di	à propos of, regarding
a scapito di	at the expense of
a titolo di	by way of (e.g. excuse)
al di sopra di	over, above
al di sotto di	beneath
al di là di	on the other side of, beyond
al di là del bene e del male	beyond good and evil
al di qua di	on this side of
al di fuori di	outside, apart from (not usu physical)
un cittadino al di sopra di ogni sospetto	a citizen above all suspicion
al di fuori di questi indizi, non c'era altro	apart from these clues there was nothing

Many prepositions expressing movement or position use **a**, e.g. **accanto a**, **davanti a**, **dietro a**, **sopra a**, **sotto a**, **vicino a**.

25.2 **attraverso**

25.2.1 Movement

Expresses movement through or across space or time, or by means of.

attraverso la strada	across the street
guardare attraverso un buco	to look through a hole
attraverso i secoli	through the centuries
attraverso lunghe indagini	through long inquiries

25.2.2 Used as adverb

un albero si era messo attraverso la strada	a tree was blocking the road
una nocciolina mi è andata attraverso/per traverso	a peanut has got stuck in my throat/went down sideways

25.3 **con**

25.3.1 Basic meanings

(a) *association; corresponds to English with*

caffè col latte
coffee with milk

un panino con il salame
a salame roll

viaggio insieme con altri
I'll travel together with others

(b) *instrument, or means of transport; corresponds to English with or by*

ho aperto la lattina con un cacciavite
I opened the can with a screwdriver

**viaggiare con l'aereo/la macchina/il tram/l'autobus/i
mezzi pubblici**
to travel by plane/car/tram/bus/public transport (cf. section
25.11.2)

arriva con l'aereo delle tre
she's arriving on the 3 o'clock plane

(c) *description (alternates with da)*

una ragazza con i/dai (R2–3) **capelli biondi**

a girl with blonde hair

una camicia con le maniche corte

a short-sleeved shirt

(d) *with adjectives that describe behavior that affects another person*

gentile con/verso (R2–3) **tutti**

polite with everybody

sei troppo buono con tutti

you're too nice to everyone

25.3.2 In adverbial phrases

con mia grande sorpresa/gioia

to my great surprise/delight

con voce rauca/ferma

in a hoarse/firm voice

con questo caldo è difficile

it's hard to work with/in this

lavorare

heat

vuoi uscire con questa pioggia?

do you want to go out in this
rain?

con combines with many abstract nouns to create adverbial expressions of manner, e.g.:

con chiarezza

clearly

con pazienza

patiently

con freddezza

coldly

25.3.3 Idiomatic expressions with **con**

con tutti i suoi difetti lo trovo

for/despite all his faults I like

simpatico

him

con tutto il rispetto

with all due respect

come va con il nuovo lavoro?

how's the new job going?

e con questo? (R1)

so what?

col cavolo (R1)/**col cazzo** (R1*)

like hell/no way!

25.4 **contro**

25.4.1 Before nouns and pronouns

Contro before nouns, **contro di** before personal pronouns

ha messo la sedia contro la parete she put the chair against the
wall

la lotta contro la mafia

the struggle against the mafia

uno contro tutti

one against all

ha puntato il fucile contro di loro

he aimed the rifle at them

25.4.2 Used as adverb

voterò contro
sei pro o contro?
ho tutti contro

I'm voting against
 are you for it or against it?
 I've got everyone against me

25.5 da

25.5.1 Basic meanings

(a) *origin; corresponds to English from, out of*

da Roma a Napoli

from Rome to Naples

dalle Alpi alle Piramidi

from the Alps to the Pyramids

dalle due alle tre

from 2 o'clock to 3 o'clock

**l'espresso delle 14 e 30 proveniente da Venezia è in arrivo
 sul primo binario**

the 2:30 express from Venice is arriving at platform one

togliere i vestiti dalla valigia

to take the clothes out of the suitcase

(b) *cause or agent in passive constructions (an extension of [a]); see also section 23.4*

la lettera è stata scritta dal suo amante

the letter was written by her lover

When the action is expressed by a noun rather than a verb, the agent is introduced by **da parte di**, e.g.

**l'approvazione da parte del Parlamento di queste leggi è
 una soluzione disperata**

the approval of these laws by the Parliament is a desperate solution

tremare dalla paura (cf. **tremare di paura**, section 25.7.1)

to tremble with fear

non ci vedo dalla fame (R1)

I am starving (lit can't see for hunger)

(c) *location, with the name of a person; corresponds to English to, at*

andiamo da Maria

let's go to Maria's

ti aspetto dall'avvocato

I'll wait for you at the lawyer's

facciamo la festa dai miei

we're having the party at my parents' place

(d) *purpose***una tazza da té** (cf **una tazza di té**, section 25.7.1)

a teacup

(e) *description***la ragazzina dai capelli rossi**

the little red-haired girl

si comporta sempre da gentiluomo

he always behaves like a gentleman

25.5.2 Expressing time

**studio l'italiano da tre anni,
dal 1999**I've been studying Italian for three
years, since 1999**ALSO e' da tre anni che
studio l'italiano****cf. sono tre anni che studio
l'italiano****parlavamo da un'ora quando
è arrivato il capo**we had been talking for an hour
when the boss arrived**abitiamo in questa casa da
quando ci siamo sposati**we've been living in this house
since we married**e' così da sempre**

it's always been like that

non la vedo da una vita

I haven't seen her for ages

**ho finito di lavorare da più di
un'ora**it's over an hour since I finished
work**erano partiti da qualche
giorno**

it was some days since they had left

d'ora in poi

from now on

dall'oggi al domani

from one day to the next

da un momento all'altro

from one moment to the next

25.5.3 Expressing purpose

una macchina da scrivere

a typewriter

un costume da bagno

a swimming costume

gli occhiali da sole

sunglasses

le scarpe da tennis

tennis shoes

25.5.4 Expressing characteristics or description

lo trattano da imbecille

they treat him like an idiot

da giovane

as a youngster

da persona onesta, ha

being an honest person, he handed

restituito i soldi

the money back

un biglietto da 10 euro	a 10-euro note
un francobollo da 50 centesimi	a 50-cent stamp
abito da sera	evening gown
sordo dall'orecchio sinistro	deaf in his left ear
io gli ho fatto da padre	I acted as a father towards him
questa stanza serve da ufficio	this room serves as an office
ho una fame da lupo!	I'm starving!
non è da lui parlare così	it's not like him to speak like that

25.5.5 **da** used with **parte**

da una parte . . . dall'altra	on the one hand . . . on the other
dall'altra parte della strada/del mondo	on/to/from the other side of the street/world
da tutte le parti	everywhere
da nessuna parte	nowhere
d'altra parte, d'altro canto	on the other hand
da parte di	on behalf of
da parte mia e dei miei genitori	on behalf of my parents and myself
salutali da parte mia	say hello to them from me
mio nonno dalla parte di mia madre	my grandfather on my mother's side
abita dalle parti del Colosseo	she lives in the area around the Colosseum
dalle mie parti si mangiano i funghi crudi	where I am from we eat mushrooms raw
io sono dalla tua parte	I'm on your side

25.5.6 With a verb in the infinitive (cf. section 27.4)

qualcosa da mangiare/bere	sth to eat/drink
che cosa vuoi da bere?	what would you like to drink?
niente da dichiarare	nothing to declare
fa un caldo da morire	It's very hot
pazzo da legare	stark raving mad
noioso da morire	deadly boring
mi è piaciuto da morire	I liked it a lot
non è da credere	you can't really believe it
c'è da diventare matti	it's enough to drive you crazy
c'è poco da ridere	there's nothing to laugh about
è un'occasione da non perdere	it's an opportunity not to be missed

25.5.7 Adverbial expressions with **da**

dal mio punto di vista	from my point of view
da cima a fondo	from top to bottom
da capo	from the beginning, from the top
da lontano/vicino	from a distance/close up
lo faccio da me	I'll do it myself
il faidat�	D.I.Y. (do it yourself)
da solo	alone
dappertutto	everywhere
riconoscere qu dalla voce	recognise sb by their voice
sono passato dalla/per la piazza	I passed by/through the piazza
trasmissione dal vivo (ALSO in diretta)	live broadcast

25.6 davanti a, prima di, avanti, di fronte a

25.6.1 Basic meanings

These prepositions all express *before* or *in front of*. **Prima di** refers to time, space, and objects in a series; **davanti a** and **di fronte a** refer principally to space but may also refer to time.

Innanzi, **dinanzi**, and **dinnanzi** cover most of the same uses as **prima** and **davanti** but are R2–3. They usually require **a**, except with certain expressions of time. **Avanti** is only used as an adverb in modern Italian (e.g. **andiamo avanti!**) except for certain set phrases.

prima delle quattro	before four o'clock
prima del tempo/innanzi tempo (R3)	prematurely
prima di partire	before leaving
l'ha fatto prima di me	he did it before me (= before I did)
l'ultima traversa prima del semaforo	the last side road before the traffic lights
Lei era prima di me nella fila avanti Cristo = a.C.	you were ahead of me in the queue before Christ = BC
prima di tutto/innanzi tutto	first of all
� comparso davanti al giudice (innanzi al giudice)	he appeared before the judge
mi stava davanti/ stava davanti a me	he was in front of me
mi stava davanti agli occhi	he was before my eyes
davanti alla casa/innanzi alla casa (R3)	in front of the house; opposite the house
di fronte alla casa/dirimpetto alla casa (R3)	opposite the house
di fronte a questa situazione	in the face of this situation

25.6.2 Used as adverbs

bisognava pensarci prima	we (you, one, etc.) should have thought of it sooner/earlier
prima o poi	sooner or later
le autorità erano sedute davanti	the authorities were sitting at the front
hai ancora molto tempo davanti (a te)	you still have lots of time ahead of you
abita qui di fronte	she lives opposite
avevo innanzi/dinanzi le prove che cercavo (R3)	I had the evidence I was looking for in front of me
tiriamo innanzi!	let's keep going!
avanti!	come in!

25.7 di

25.7.1 Basic meanings

- (a) *possession, corresponds to English genitive ('s, s')* or of

questa macchina è di mia sorella

this car is my sister's

una strada di Napoli

a Naples street

- (b) *origin (associated with [a]); corresponds to English from*

è di Bologna

she's from Bologna

NOTE **Viene da Bologna** may mean the same thing, or may imply that she is coming from Bologna now or that she has just arrived from there

- (c) *material from which something is made (fig associated with [b])*

la statua di marmo

the marble statue

un sacchetto di plastica

a plastic bag

- (d) *cause, when a physical or emotional condition*

morì di dolore

he died of grief

ha pianto di gioia

she wept for/with joy

tremare di paura

to tremble with fear

cf. **tremare dalla paura**

(section 25.5.1)

soffre di asma

he suffers from asthma

(e) *concern or subject matter*

questo libro tratta dell'industrializzazione del dopoguerra

this book deals with post-war industrialization

non so niente di questo

I know nothing about this

Dei delitti e delle pene (treatise by G. L. Beccaria)

On crime and punishment

(f) *introducing a descriptive or specifying phrase*

italiano di nascita

Italian by birth

parrucchiere di professione

hairdresser by trade

una tazza di té

a cup of tea

(cf. **una tazza da té**, section 25.5.1)

(g) *linking nouns in apposition*

la città di Firenze

the city of Florence

quel matto di Giorgio

that madman Giorgio

il mese di maggio

the month of May

25.7.2 In expressions of description or origin

rosso di capelli

red-haired

sano di mente

of sound mind

una commedia di Goldoni

a play by Goldoni

di is used with adjectives when the following noun refers to a general substance (or color) rather than a single object, e.g.:

era coperto di polvere

it was covered in/with dust

BUT coperto da una tela

BUT covered by/with a cloth

macchiato di sangue

spattered in/with blood

la stanza era piena di fumo

the room was full of smoke

vestito di nero

dressed in black

25.7.3 Expressing time (see also **in**, section 25.11.1)

di giorno/notte

by day/night

di mattina/sera

in the morning/evening

di prima mattina

early in the morning

di buon mattino/di buon'ora

early (usu in the morning)

d'estate/inverno (less commonly

in summer/winter (in

d'autunno/primavera)

autumn/spring)

di questi tempi/giorni

these days

cento di questi giorni!

many happy returns!

25.7.4 In expressions of price and measurement

il prezzo della macchina è 5000 euro

the price of the car is 5000 euro

l'aumento è del dieci per cento

the increase is 10%

25.7.5 Idiomatic expressions

esco di casa/scuola presto	I leave the house/school early
vado via di qua	I'm going away from here
dare del cretino a qu	call sb a cretin
dare del tu/Lei/voi a qu	use the tu/Lei/voi form of address with sb, be on first/last name terms with sb
diamoci del tu!	let's use first names
dire di sì o di no	to say yes or no
l'ho visto di	I saw him from behind/from the
spalle/profilo/faccia	side (in profile)/from the front
di nascosto	covertly
di conseguenza	consequently
di seguito	in a row, continuously
di tutto cuore	willingly, with pleasure
vivere di espedienti	to live by one's wits
di qua/là	over here/there; this way/that way
ho speso tanti di quei	I spent so much money
soldi (R1)	
ci vuole tanta di quella	you need so much patience
pazienza (R1)	
ha preteso tanto di firma sul	he even demanded a signature on
documento	the document
di . . . in . . .	is used in certain expressions corresponding to from . . . to . . .
di anno in anno	from year to year
di ora in ora	gradually, from one moment to the next
di tanto di tanto/di volta in	every now and again
volta	
(girare) di città in città	(to wander) from town to town
di male in peggio	from bad to worse

25.7.6 "Grammatical" uses of **di**

- (a) in comparisons (see chapter 17):
sei più furbo di me
you're smarter than me
- (b) in superlative constructions:
il paese più bello del mondo
the most beautiful country in the world
- (c) joining an indefinite pronoun and an adjective (always masculine singular):
niente di nuovo/particolare
nothing new/special
un che di misterioso
a certain mysterious quality

25.8 dietro, dopo

Dopo expresses *after* and **dietro** expresses *behind*. Both also express the idea of one thing occurring after another. **Indietro** is an adverb and expresses *backwards, behind*.

	dopo	dietro
time	dopo le sei after six o'clock	–
place	dopo l'incrocio past the intersection	dietro la porta behind the door
successive events	uno dopo l'altro one after the other	uno dietro l'altro one after the other

25.8.1 dietro

dietro a me/te	behind me/you (in general)
dietro di me/te	right behind me/you
andare dietro a qu	to follow sb's example
dietro richiesta	on request
dietro consiglio di	on the recommendation of
dietro versamento di (R3)	on payment of
dietro le quinte	behind the scenes, in the wings

25.8.2 dopo

dopo due mesi di assenza	after two months' absence
l'ho fatto dopo di lui (R2–3)/ dopo lui (R1)	I did it after him
dice una stupidaggine dopo/dietro l'altra	he says one stupid thing after another
leggeva libro dopo/dietro libro	he read book after book
dopo tutto	after all, in conclusion
il dopo Vietnam	the post-Vietnam period
dopo Cristo = d.C.	Anno Domini = AD
dopo di Lei, prego	please, after you

25.8.3 dopo, dietro, and indietro used as adverbs

poco dopo	shortly after/afterwards
il giorno dopo	the day after, the next day
ci vediamo dopo	see you later
guardare indietro	to look back
è rimasto indietro	he stayed behind OR he got left behind
avanti e indietro	backwards and forwards, to and fro

25.9 fino a, sino a, verso

Verso expresses movement *towards* and **fino a** expresses the end-point. Both can refer to space, time or objects. **Sino a** is an R3 equivalent of **fino a**.

verso Napoli	towards Naples
verso casa	towards home/homeward(s)
abita verso il centro	she lives near the city center
verso l'alto/il basso	upwards/downwards
verso le cinque	towards/around five o'clock
verso ottobre	around October
i suoi sentimenti verso suo padre/verso di lui	her feelings towards her father/towards him
fino a qui/fin qui	here (= up to here, as far as here)
ti accompagno fino all'angolo	I'll walk with you as far as the corner
ho dormito fino alle tre	I slept until three o'clock
fino alle tre non ho dormito	I didn't sleep until three o'clock
fino alla fine del mondo	until the end of the world
fino a quando ti fermi qui?	how long are you staying here?
posso spendere fino a cinquanta euro	I can spend up to 50 euro
schiaaccia la pasta fino a ridurla in una sfoglia	press the pasta until you reduce it to a sheet
Note that fino/sino can combine with other prepositions to emphasize their meaning. It is usually abbreviated to fin/sin , e.g.:	
è arrivata gente fin dall'Australia	people came even from Australia
l'acqua è arrivata fin dentro la stanza	the water reached right into the room
ne ho fin sopra i capelli	I've had it up to here (fig)
ho aspettato fin troppo	I've really waited too long

25.10 fuori

25.10.1 Used as preposition

Fuori may be used with **di** or **da**, but is often used without either.

fuori Milano, fuori della Lombardia	outside Milan, outside Lombardy
oggi la signora è fuori sede	she is out of the office/out of town today
questa frutta è fuori stagione	this fruit is out of season
fuori servizio	out of order

fuori luogo	out of place, uncalled for (fig)
è fuori dubbio	it is beyond doubt
giocare fuori casa	to play away

25.10.2 Used as adverb

fa freddo fuori	it's cold outside
l'hanno buttato fuori	they threw him out
stasera mangiamo fuori	tonight we're eating out
fuori da casa (mia)!	get out of my house!

25.11 in

25.11.1 Basic meanings

- (a) *location; corresponds to English in*
abitano in Sicilia, negli Stati Uniti, nelle Marche
 they live in Sicily, in the USA, in the Marche
- (b) *destination, direction; corresponds to English to or into*
vado in Italia, nella Calabria meridionale
 I'm going to Italy, southern Calabria
il treno è entrato nella galleria
 the train went into the tunnel
andare in orbita
 to go into orbit
- (c) *a moment within a period of time; corresponds to English in*
in giugno; nel 1989; nel passato
 in June; in 1989; in the past

25.11.2 Expressing location or movement

nella/dentro la scatola	in the box
in centro	in/to the centre of town/downtown
in periferia	in/to the suburbs
in via Garibaldi	in/to via Garibaldi
in piazza	in/at/to the piazza
in carcere/prigione/galera	in prison
in casa	in the house, inside
cf. a casa	(at) home
avvocato in Milano (R3)	lawyer in Milan
in aereo/macchina/tram/ autobus/pullman/treno/ nave/bicicletta (cf. section 25.3.1)	by plane/car/tram/bus/coach/ train/ship/bicycle

in crisi	in trouble/in a spot of bother
in biblioteca/libreria/farmacia/ ufficio/banca/chiesa	in/at/to the library/bookshop/ pharmacy/office/bank/church
in tavola	on the table (of food)
in Serie A	in the first division

25.11.3 Expressing change

andare in fumo	to go up in smoke (fig)
andare in pensione	to retire (from work)
si è trasformato in bestia	he turned into a beast
BUT è andato in bestia	BUT he flew into a rage
Maria Rossi in Brambilla	Maria Brambilla née Rossi
tradurre dall'italiano in inglese	to translate from Italian (in)to English
convertire in html	to convert to HTML
cambiare dollari in euro	to change dollars into euro

25.11.4 Expressing time

in quel momento	at that moment
in/nel futuro	in the future
in/a quel tempo	at that time
in tempo di guerra	in time of war
in tutta la mia vita	in my (whole) life
in (nell') inverno/estate/ primavera	in winter/summer/spring
nell'estate dell'88	in the summer of '88
il giorno in cui	the day when/on which
nel mese di maggio	in the month of May
nello stesso tempo	at the same time
nell'arco di un anno	in the course of a year
l'ho fatto in dieci giorni	I did it in ten days
lo farò in dieci giorni	I'll do it in ten days/it will take me ten days to do it
lo farò in settimana	I'll do it this week
lo farò in giornata	I'll do it today
in ritardo/anticipo	late/early (for an appointment; tardi/presto = late/early in general)

25.11.5 Expressing manner, means, or material

essere in lutto	to be in mourning
essere in divisa	to be in uniform
essere in piedi/ginocchio	to be standing/kneeling
essere in pigiama	to be in one's pyjamas
in maniche di camicia	in shirt sleeves

un testo (scritto) in	a text (written) in dialect/Latin/
dialetto/latino/codice	code
trasmissione in differita	delayed broadcast
trasmissione in diretta (ALSO	live broadcast
dal vivo)	
pagare in contanti	to pay cash
mangiare in bianco	to eat simply (esp during illness)
una notte in bianco	a sleepless night
la statua è in marmo	the statue is made from/out of marble
in focuses attention on the material, while di is more of a simple description: una statua in marmo = a statue made out of marble, una statua di marmo = a marble statue	

25.11.6 Common idioms and expressions involving **in**

in breve	in short, to put it briefly
in ogni caso	in any case
in linea d'aria	as the crow flies
in qualche modo	in one way or another
in parte	in part
in seguito	subsequently, next, in the future
in fretta e furia	in a great hurry
in poche parole	in a few words
in parole povere	to put it bluntly
laurea in lettere	bachelor of arts
eravamo in dieci/pochi/tanti	there were ten/only a few/lots of us
in alto/basso	up/down (there)
si è messo in testa che . . .	he has got it into his head that . . .
più in là	further on
essere in vita/in fin di vita	to be alive/to be on the point of death
in prima pagina	on the first page (of a newspaper)
in bocca al lupo!	good luck!
in un batter d'occhio	in the blink of an eye

25.11.7 In complex prepositional expressions

in base a	on the basis of
in cerca di	in search of
in cima a	on top of
in conformità a	conforming to
in confronto a	in comparison with
nei confronti di	with respect to
in fondo a	at the bottom/end of
in forza di	by force of/because of
in funzione di	in terms of

in luogo di	in place of
in mezzo a	in the middle of
in nome della legge	in the name of the law
BUT nel nome del Padre del	in the name of the Father, Son,
Figlio e dello Spirito Santo	and Holy Spirit
in occasione di	on the occasion of
in onore di	in honor of
in presenza di qu	in the presence of sb
nei pressi di	nearby
in quanto a (qc/fare qc)	as regards (sth/doing sth)
in riguardo a/nei riguardi di	with respect to
in seguito a	following
in vista di	in view of

25.12 per

25.12.1 Basic meanings

(a) *movement towards or through (both space and time)*

parte per Mantova

she is leaving for Mantua

sono passato per Pisa

I passed through/by Pisa

ci siamo rimasti per tre ore

we stayed there for three hours

(b) *purpose; corresponds to English for, to, in order to*

sono venuto in biblioteca per studiare

I have come to the library to study

25.12.2 Expressing movement

il treno per Lecce è in

partenza sul primo binario

sono passato per la piazza

camminava per la strada

the train to Lecce is departing from
platform one

I came via the piazza

she was walking along the street

25.12.3 Expressing time

va via per una settimana

torno per ferragosto

viene per tre giorni

lo rimandiamo per/di

un mese

va per i diciotto anni

per il momento

he is going away for a week

I'll be back for/by/in time for 15
August

he is coming for three days

we'll put it off for a month

she is turning eighteen
for the moment

per un attimo/momento/ istante/secondo	for a second/moment/instant
per la prima/l'ultima volta	for the first/last time
è tutto per ora	that's all for now
è arrivato per primo/ultimo	he was first/last to arrive

25.12.4 Expressing purpose

l'ho comprato per te	I bought it for you
un box per due macchine	a garage for two cars
l'ho fatto per te	I did it for you (= for your sake)
firma per sua moglie	he signs for (= on behalf of) his wife
l'hanno cambiata per una macchina nuova	they exchanged it for a new car
siamo qui per quello	that's what we are here for
non ho abbastanza soldi per comprarlo	I don't have enough money to buy it

25.12.5 Expressing reason or cause

l'hanno arrestato per non aver pagato le tasse	they arrested him for not paying his taxes
l'hanno licenziato per incompetenza	they've dismissed him for incompetence
per colpa tua ho perso il treno	it's your fault I missed the train
per questo, . . .	because of this/that's why
la risposta esiste per ciò stesso che esiste la domanda	the answer exists by the very fact that the question exists

25.12.6 In expressions of quantity

due per volta	two at a time
due per due	two by two
giorno per giorno	day by day
cinquanta per cento	50%

25.12.7 Common idioms and expressions involving **per**

è troppo per me	it's too much for me
per me, . . .	in my opinion, . . .
per me va bene	it's OK by me
passa per intelligente	he is considered intelligent
l'ho scambiata per tua sorella	I mistook her for your sister
per quanto mi riguarda/ per quel che mi riguarda/ per ciò che mi riguarda (R2-3)	as far as I am concerned
per caso	by chance
per fortuna	luckily

per disgrazia	unfortunately
per certo	certainly
per nessun motivo	on no account
per iscritto	in writing
per cui	therefore
per favore/piacere/cortesia	please
per mezzo di	by means of
per via di	because of

25.13 sotto

25.13.1 Basic meanings

Sotto expresses the notion of *under, underneath, below*. It also appears in a number of expressions with a more figurative meaning. As a preposition, **sotto** is the usual opposite of **sopra** and **su**; as an adverb, **sotto** often, but not always, alternates with **giù**.

due gradi sotto zero	two degrees below zero
sotto la pioggia	in the rain
sotto pena di morte	on pain of death
essere sotto le armi/la naia (R1)	to be on military service
sotto processo	on trial
sotto ogni punto di vista	from all points of view
sotto casa	downstairs, down below
sotto Natale/le feste	before Christmas/the festive season
sotto banco	under the table, illegal(ly)
finire sotto una macchina	to be run over by a car

25.13.2 Idiomatic expressions with parts of the body

sotto braccio	arm in arm
prendere qc sotto gamba	to take sth (too) lightly
sotto mano	nearby, at hand
avere qc sottocchio/sott'occhio	to have sth under one's gaze

25.13.3 Used as an adverb

il bosco si estende sotto per 1800 metri	the forest extends for 1800 meters (downhill)
un albero con un cartello sotto mettersi sotto	a tree with a sign under it to start working hard/to take the initiative
mettere sotto qu (con la macchina)	to run sb over (with a car)

sotto!
sotto sotto

down to it!/get to work!
 secretly/deep down (fig)

25.14 **su, sopra**

25.14.1 Basic meanings

Sopra and **su** both express *on, over, above, on top of*. They are interchangeable in most expressions, but not all. **Su** has a wider range of uses than **sopra**. The following examples contain one or both prepositions according to what occurs in current usage.

Su is always articulated with the definite article, **sopra** never is. In higher registers, **su** is often followed by **di** before a personal pronoun or a noun beginning with the letter **u-**, e.g. **su di me, su di noi, su di una collina**.

(a) *position on, above, over, on top of*

c'è un libro sul/sopra il tavolo

there's a book on the table

una casa sul/sopra il mare

a house overlooking/by the sea

(b) *movement onto, over sth*

vado sul/sopra il balcone per un po' d'aria

I'm going on the balcony for a bit of air

l'aereo ha volato sulla/sopra la città

the plane flew over the city

25.14.2 Expressing location or direction

sulla destra/sinistra/sopra la destra/sinistra (R.3) on the right/left-hand side

mise un mattone sull'altro/sopra l'altro he put one brick on top of the other

mille metri sopra il livello del mare 1000 meters above sea level

un grado sopra zero one degree above zero

cento chilometri sopra Napoli la Marcia su Roma 100 km past Naples
 the March on Rome (October 1922)

su Canale 5 on Channel 5

25.14.3 In expressions of time or number

su per giù approximately

sul presto/tardi early/late

sul far del mattino/della sera in the early morning/evening

sul calar della sera	as evening was falling
sulle prime	at first
otto su dieci	eight out of ten
tre disoccupati su cento abitanti	three unemployed persons per hundred inhabitants
ventiquattro ore su ventiquattro	24 hours a day

Note the difference between **su** and **sopra** in these expressions:

costa sui 500 euro	it costs around 500 euro
costa sopra i 500 euro	it costs more than 500 euro
pesa sui cento chili	it weighs around 100 kilograms
pesa sopra i cento chili	it weighs more than 100 kilograms
un ragazzo sui vent'anni	a young man of around twenty
un ragazzo sopra i vent'anni	a young man over twenty
una donna sulla cinquantina	a woman of around fifty
una donna sopra la cinquantina	a woman over fifty

25.14.4 **su** expressing subject-matter (**sopra** is less common)

un libro su Pasolini	a book on Pasolini
un dibattito sul voto all'estero	a debate on overseas voting
una mostra sul Rinascimento	an exhibition on the Renaissance
un giudizio sulla poesia contemporanea	a judgment on contemporary poetry

25.14.5 **su** in idiomatic expressions

su scala internazionale	on an international scale
sul serio	seriously
credere a qc sulla parola	to take sb at their word
mettere una questione sul tappeto	to put the matter on the table/on the agenda
sul piede di guerra	on a war footing
un fallo su Del Piero	a foul on Del Piero
l'articolo è apparso sul Corriere della Sera	the article appeared in the <i>Corriere della Sera</i>
la camera dava/guardava sul cortile	the bedroom gave onto/looked out onto the courtyard
un vestito su misura	a tailor-made suit/outfit
su due piedi	immediately, without prior warning
si è tenuto sulle generali	he kept to generalities
giurare sulla Bibbia	to swear on the Bible
imposta sul reddito	income tax
imposta sul valore aggiunto (IVA)	Value-Added Tax (UK)/Goods and Services Tax (Aus)

si contano sulla punta delle dita	you can count them on the fingers of one hand
oggi è sulle spine sulla punta della lingua	she is very anxious/nervy today on the tip of one's tongue
lui sta sulle sue su Internet sul Web	he keeps himself to himself on the Internet on the (World Wide) Web

25.14.6 **su** and **sopra** used as adverbs

su!	come on!
su con la vita!	look up! / chin up!
su le mani!	hands up!
un foglio di carta con su/sopra scritto “Aiuto”	a sheet of paper with “Help” written on it
è una famiglia molto su (R1–2)	they are a high-placed family/ in high society
oggi è su di giri	he's very excited/in a good mood today
le azioni sono andate su	my shares have gone up
vorrebbe mettere su famiglia	he would like to marry
da dieci euro in su	from 10 euro up
dalla cintola in su (R3–from Dante)	from the waist up
di cui sopra (R3)	above, above-mentioned
come sopra, vedi sopra	as above, see above
mettiamoci una pietra sopra	let's forget it
pensarci su/sopra	to think about it
voglio dormire sopra	I want to sleep on it (fig)

25.15 tra, fra

These two prepositions are identical in meaning. **Tra** is somewhat more commonly used than **fra**. The only clear reason to prefer one over the other is to avoid unpleasant sound combinations, e.g.:

fra tre ore is preferred to **tra tre ore**
tra fratelli is preferred to **fra fratelli**

25.15.1 Basic meanings

- (a) between (*both space and time*)
tra il ristorante e il negozio
 between the restaurant and the shop
tra le cinque e le sei
 between five and six (o'clock)

(b) among

si muoveva tra la folla parlando con tutti

he moved among the crowd speaking to everyone

25.15.2 Expressing time or distance

**fra breve/tra poco/tra non
molto**

soon

**tra due chilometri c'è un
benzinaio**

there's a petrol pump in two km

arriverà fra venti minuti

she'll be here in twenty minutes

25.15.3 Common idioms and expressions involving **tra, fra**

tra l'altro

moreover, furthermore

detto tra noi

between us

una discussione tra amici

a discussion among friends

sei il migliore tra i miei amici

you're the best of my friends

**tra tutti c'era una ventina di
persone**

in all there were about twenty
people

**tra amici e parenti ci saranno
state cento persone**

there must have been 100 people
including friends and relatives

**tra lavoro e la famiglia non ho
un momento libero**

with work and the family I don't
have a free moment

parlava fra sé (e sé) (R2-3)

he was talking to himself

distinguere tra caso e caso

to distinguish between one case
and another

26 English prepositions

This section lists common English prepositions and some Italian equivalents. The focus is on Italian expressions that are different from the usual equivalent of each English expression.

26.1 about

26.1.1 In the sense of “concerning”

a book about neorealism	un libro sul neorealismo
he doesn't understand anything about the issue	non capisce niente della questione
what's this about?	di che cosa si tratta?

26.1.2 In the sense of “approximately”

about midday	verso mezzogiorno
about fifty people	circa cinquanta persone/una cinquantina di persone/ cinquanta persone circa (R3)
he is about twenty	lui ha circa vent'anni/ha una ventina d'anni/è sui venti anni/è sulla ventina

With multiples of ten up to 90, one can say: **è sulla ventina/trentina/
quarantina/cinquantina/sessantina/settantina/ottantina/
novantina**

R1* vulgar or indecent R1 informal, colloquial R2 neutral, unmarked R3 formal, written Italian words and expressions are R2 unless otherwise indicated. See also p. 5.

26.2 above

above the limit	oltre il limite
above the village	sul/sopra il paese
the Arno above Florence	l'Arno sopra/a monte di Firenze
above average	sopra la media/al di sopra della media

26.3 according to

according to John/in my opinion	secondo Giovanni/me
according to the law	secondo la legge

26.4 across

to go across the bridge	attraversare il ponte
she lives across the piazza	abita dall'altra parte della piazza
the house across the river	la casa oltre/dall'altra parte del fiume
he ran across the field (cf. chapter 21)	ha attraversato il campo correndo/di corsa

26.5 along

Usually **lungo** or **per**; **rasente** stresses proximity.

he is walking along the road/river/coast	cammina lungo la strada/il fiume/la costa
I saw them along the road	li ho visti per la strada
along the wall	lungo il muro/rasente il muro
he ran along the edge of the precipice	correva rasente l'orlo del precipizio
along with	insieme a/con

26.6 among

among the Italians	presso gli italiani
among friends	tra amici

26.7 as

as a child	da bambino
she was successful as a writer	ebbe successo come scrittrice
dressed as a priest	vestito da prete
as far as the village	fino al paese
as far as I know	che sappia io
as for him	quanto a lui
as to the financial aspects	quanto ai risvolti finanziari
as soon as possible	appena possibile/quanto prima
as well as possible	il meglio possibile

26.8 at

26.8.1 Expressing place

at home	a casa
at my/his/our place	a casa mia/sua/nostra OR da me/lui/noi
at the doctor's	dal dottore
at school	a scuola
at church	in chiesa
at the bank/office	in banca/ufficio
at the theater	a teatro
at University	all'Università
at the library	in biblioteca
at work	al lavoro
at sea	in/sul mare

There has been an accident at sea.

C'è stata una disgrazia sul mare/in alto mare.

There he is, in the sea.

Eccolo, nel mare.

26.8.2 Expressing time

at midnight	a mezzanotte
at ten o'clock	alle dieci
at 7.20 pm	alle 7,20 / alle 19,20 = alle sette e venti / alle diciannove e venti
at about seven	alle sette circa/verso le sette
at this time	a quest'ora
at the same time	allo/nello stesso tempo/alla stessa ora
at day/night	di giorno/notte

at the age of twenty
at present
at the weekend(s)

all'età di vent'anni
in questo momento/attualmente
il weekend/il fine settimana

26.8.3 In other expressions

at best
at least
at once
at most
at peace
at the top
at first sight
at bottom
at the point of death
at 100 miles an hour

at hand
at any rate
at stake
one thing at a time

nella migliore delle ipotesi
almeno/per lo meno
subito
al massimo
in pace
in cima/in alto
a prima vista
in fondo
in fin di vita
a (una velocità di) 160 km
all'ora/a 160 km l'ora
a portata di mano
ad/in ogni modo/comunque
in gioco
una cosa per volta

26.9 because of

because of his age

per la sua età/a causa della sua età
(R2-3)

26.10 before

26.10.1 Expressing place

he stood before the house
to have sth before one's eyes
the problem before us

a crime before God and man

stava davanti alla casa
avere qc sotto gli occhi
il problema che ci sta davanti/che
abbiamo di fronte
un delitto innanzi a Dio e agli
uomini

26.10.2 Expressing time

before me
she'll come before six
before long
the day before yesterday

Before Christ (BC)

prima di me
verrà prima delle sei
fra non molto/fra poco
l'altro ieri/ier(i) l'altro/avant'ieri
(R.3)
avanti Cristo (a.C.)

26.10.3 Expressing order of importance etc.

he puts money before everything	mette i soldi davanti a tutto
------------------------------------	--------------------------------------

26.11 below

below zero	sotto zero
the Tiber below Rome	il Tevere sotto/a valle di Roma
below average	sotto la media/al di sotto della media

26.12 beneath

to disappear beneath the waves	sparire sotto le onde
beneath contempt	vergognoso, ignobile
that action is beneath him	quell'atto è indegno di lui

26.13 beyond

twenty kilometers beyond Bologna	venti km oltre/dopo Bologna
beyond the horizon	oltre l'orizzonte/al di là dell'orizzonte
beyond human understanding	al di là della comprensione umana
beyond my wildest dreams	al di là dei miei sogni più folli
he's living beyond his means	vive al di sopra dei suoi mezzi
it's beyond me	non lo capisco/non ci arrivo (R1–2)

26.14 by

26.14.1 Expressing place

by my side	al mio fianco/a fianco a me
she sat down by her father (i.e. near)	si è seduta vicino a suo padre
she sat down by her father (i.e. alongside)	si è seduta accanto a suo padre

he took me by the hand
he led my by the hand
we went by his house

mi ha preso per mano
mi ha portato per mano
siamo passati per casa sua

26.14.2 Expressing time

by nine o'clock

entro/per (R1-2) le nove
entro has more the meaning of
“not later than.” This can be
made explicit:

by Friday
by now

entro e non oltre le nove no
later than nine o'clock
per/entro venerdì
ormai/a questo punto

26.14.3 Expressing measure

taller by thirty centimeters
more interesting by far
I am paid by the hour/week
to hire by the day
he sells wine by the litre
eggs are sold by the dozen
she missed the target by a
meter
15 cm by 10 cm

più alto di trenta cm
di gran lunga più interessante
sono pagato a ore/a settimana
noleggiare al giorno
vende il vino al litro
le uova si vendono a dozzine
ha mancato il bersaglio di un
metro
15 cm per 10 cm

26.14.4 Expressing means

to travel by train/bus/car/plane

viaggiare in treno/autobus/
macchina/ aereo OR col
treno/con l'autobus/con la
macchina/con l'aereo

to travel by bike
may I pay by cheque?
to contact sb by phone/email

viaggiare in bicicletta
posso pagare con un assegno?
contattare qu per telefono/
email/posta elettronica

by air mail
by means of
by no means

per via aerea
per mezzo di
in nessun modo/neanche per
sogno (R1-2)

by all means

certamente, senz'altro

26.14.5 Expressing cause or agent

For the use of **by** in passive constructions, see also section 23.4.

by accident/mistake	per caso/sbaglio
a play by Pirandello	una commedia di Pirandello
made by hand	fatto a mano
the battery was invented by Alessandro Volta	la pila fu inventata da Alessandro Volta
the invention of the battery by Alessandro Volta	l'invenzione della pila da parte di Alessandro Volta ALSO ad opera di (R3)

26.14.6 In other expressions

one by one	uno alla volta
I know her by sight	la conosco di vista
side by side	fianco a fianco
I learned the whole poem by heart	ho imparato a memoria l'intera poesia
by ear	a orecchio
by my watch	secondo il mio orologio
he swore by all that is holy	giurò su tutto ciò che vi è di più sacro (R2–3)
by way of example	a mo' di esempio
by dint of hard work	a forza di fatica
by Jove!	per Giove/per Bacco!

26.15 down

we walked down the street	camminavamo lungo/per la strada
we walked down the stairs (cf. chapter 21)	camminavamo giù per le scale/ scendevamo le scale a piedi
tears ran down his cheeks	le lacrime gli scendevano lungo le guance
down the centuries	lungo/attraverso i secoli
downtown	in centro

26.16 during

during the day	durante il giorno
during one's lifetime	per tutta la vita/vita natural durante (R3)

26.17 except (for)

every day except Sunday
everyone except for him

**tutti i giorni eccetto domenica
tutti tranne lui/eccetto lui/salvo lui
(R3)**

the flat is finished except
for the kitchen

**a parte la cucina, l'appartamento è
pronto**

26.18 for

26.18.1 Expressing benefit

a present for her husband
a reward for sth
for your benefit

**un regalo per suo marito
un premio per qc
a tuo beneficio**

26.18.2 Expressing purpose

for pleasure
what's for dinner?
they're coming to my
house for dinner
cf. guess who's coming to
dinner
for monetary gain
what's it for?

**per (puro) divertimento
che cosa c'è per cena?
vengono a cena da me

indovina chi viene a cena

a scopo di lucro (R3)
a che cosa serve?**

26.18.3 Expressing cause

to shout for joy
he was jailed for murder
for this reason

**gridare dalla/di gioia
fu imprigionato per omicidio
per questo motivo**

26.18.4 Expressing time

I have been living in
Rome for three years

we had been living in
Rome for five years

**vivo a Roma da tre anni /
sono/è (R1) tre anni che vivo a
Roma /
è da tre anni che vivo a Roma
vivevamo a Roma da cinque anni /
erano/era (R1) cinque anni che
vivevamo a Roma /
era da cinque anni che vivevamo a
Roma**

they lived in Rome for two years when they were just married	hanno vissuto (sono vissuti) a Roma per due anni appena sposati
she will be in Venice for two weeks	sarà a Venezia per due settimane
they are here for two days	sono qui per due giorni
he was there for a week = he spent a week there	c'è stato lì per una settimana/ci ha passato una settimana
she was there for a week = she was going to stay for a week	era lì per una settimana / si fermava lì per una settimana / si sarebbe fermata lì per una settimana
he won't be back for a month	non ritorna per un mese/ritorna fra un mese
I'll do it for Monday	lo faccio per lunedì

26.18.5 Expressing place

at Terontola you change for Perugia	a Terontola si cambia per Perugia
I'm leaving for Calabria	parto per la Calabria

26.18.6 In other expressions

for example	per/ad esempio
for sale	in vendita
as for me	per me
for all I know	per quanto ne sappia io/ne so (R1)

26.19 from

26.19.1 Expressing place

she comes from Australia (i.e. that is her country of origin)	lei è dell'Australia/australiana
she comes from Australia (i.e. she is traveling or has just arrived from there)	lei viene dall'Australia
where are you from?	di dove sei?
the train from Lecce (to Milan)	il treno da Lecce (a Milano)
from top to bottom	da cima a fondo
from beginning to end	dall'inizio alla fine
from the beginning	da capo
from head to foot	dalla testa ai piedi
tell him from me that . . .	digli da parte mia che . . .

26.19.2 Expressing time

from dawn to dusk
from today on
from now on
from 1 January
from day to day
from time to time

dall'alba al tramonto
da oggi in poi
da/d'ora in poi
(a partire) dal 1 gennaio
di giorno in giorno
di quando in quando/di tanto in tanto

26.19.3 In other expressions

he is suffering from AIDS
from what I've heard
from my point of view
from the psychological point of view

è malato di AIDS
da quello che ho sentito io
dal mio punto di vista
sotto il profilo psicologico

26.20 in

26.20.1 Expressing place

in our country/region/city
in the Alps
in Turin

in Italy
BUT in southern (etc.) Italy
in + names of Italian *regioni*
f sing names
m sing names

all pl names
in town
in the country/mountains
in the sky
in heaven
in the piazza
wounded in the arm
blind in one eye
in the direction of the harbour
in the neighborhood of
in the air (lit and fig)

da noi
sulle/in mezzo alle Alpi
a Torino BUT in Torino (R3) =
within Turin
in Italia
nell'Italia meridionale (ecc)

in Lombardia
nel Lazio, nel Veneto, nel Molise
BUT it is increasingly common to
use **in** without the article, esp **in**
Piemonte, in Abruzzo, in
Veneto, in Trentino, in Friuli
nelle Marche, negli Abruzzi
in città/paese
in campagna/montagna
nel/in cielo
in cielo
in piazza
ferito al braccio
cieco da un occhio
verso il/in direzione del porto
nei pressi di/nei paraggi di (R3)
in aria (lit), nell'aria (fig)

in space
 in a tent
 in the newspaper
 in the saddle (of horse and
 bike)

to sit in an armchair
 to have sth in one's mouth
 in the sun
 in the shade/shadow
 in the rain
 in the snow

in the kitchen/bedroom
 in the bathroom/living room
 in the garden
 in bed
 in place of
 in your place (lit and fig)
 to save in memory

nello spazio
in tenda
sul giornale
in sella

essere seduto in poltrona
avere qc in bocca
al sole
all'ombra
sotto la pioggia
sotto la neve (when it is
 falling)/**nella neve** (on the
 ground)

in/nella cucina/camera
in/nel bagno/salotto
in/nel giardino
a letto
al posto di
al tuo posto
salvare in memoria

26.20.2 Expressing time

in the morning
 in the afternoon
 it is better to sleep in the
 afternoon

yesterday I slept in the
 afternoon

in the evening
 in the early afternoon
 in August
 in mid August
 in (the) spring/ summer/
 autumn/ winter

in the winter of 1944
 in 1948
 in the twenty-first century
 in our time
 in the time of the Caesars
 I will do it in ten days (i.e. in
 ten days from now)
 I will do it in ten days (i.e. it
 will take me ten days)

al mattino/la mattina/di mattina
il/nel/di pomeriggio
è meglio dormire di pomeriggio

ieri ho dormito nel pomeriggio

la/di sera
nel primo pomeriggio
in agosto
a metà agosto
d'/di OR in primavera/estate/
autunno/inverno

di implies some usual activity; **in**
 is used for a specific time reference
nell'inverno del 1944
nel 1948

nel 21° secolo
ai nostri giorni/tempi
ai tempi dei Cesari
lo farò fra dieci giorni

lo farò in/entro dieci giorni

I did it in ten days (i.e. it took
me ten days)
in this weather
in the long run
in the short/mid/long term

l'ho fatto in dieci giorni
con questo tempo
a lungo andare
a breve/medio/lungo termine

26.20.3 In other expressions

the best in the world
in a happy/sad voice
in a whisper
in a strange way
(in) my way
in the light of these revelations
in that case
in peace/silence
to be in mourning
in writing
in my opinion

in the opinion of the judges
dressed in white/black/red
dressed in mourning
to pay in cash or in kind
in power
in the finals/semifinals
in the present situation
in parentheses
four in number
in all sincerity

il migliore del mondo
con voce felice/triste
sotto voce/a voce bassa
in modo strano
a modo mio
alla luce di queste rivelazioni
in questo caso
in pace/silenzio
essere in lutto
per iscritto
secondo me/a mio parere/a
parer mio (R3)
secondo i giudici
vestito di bianco/nero/rosso
vestito a lutto
pagare in contanti o in natura
al potere
in finale/semifinale
allo stato attuale delle cose
tra parentesi
quattro di numero
con tutta sincerità

26.21 inside

inside the room
inside two months

dentro la/nella stanza
nel giro di due mesi/entro due
mesi

26.22 instead of

instead of flowers
he acted instead of his son

invece/al posto dei fiori
ha fatto le veci di suo figlio (R3)

26.23 into

to fall into sb's hands
to translate into Spanish
to drive into a tree

**cadere nelle/tra le mani di qu
tradurre in spagnolo
andare (con la macchina) contro
un albero**

26.24 of

some of them
all of them
the five of us
a friend of mine
the city of Milan
a house (made) of wood
of late
of old
of his own accord

**alcuni di loro
tutti (loro)
noi cinque
un mio amico
la città di Milano
una casa di legno
ultimamente
anticamente
di sua spontanea volontà**

26.25 off

to get off the train/tram/
bus/plane
she fell off a ladder
off shore
off Naples
off the coast of Calabria
offside

**scendere dal treno/tram/
dall'autobus/l'aereo
è caduta da una scala
al largo
al largo di Napoli
al largo della Calabria
(in) fuorigioco**

26.26 on

26.26.1 Expressing place

the book is on the table
the picture is hanging on the
wall
the cat is sitting on the wall
on the ceiling
on the stage (of a play etc.)
on the stage (of a performer)
to travel on the river (i.e. by
boat)

**il libro è sul/sopra il tavolo
il quadro è appeso al muro/alla
parete
il gatto è seduto sul muro
sul soffitto
sul palcoscenico/sulla scena
in scena
viaggiare sul fiume**

to have a picnic on the river (i.e. beside it)	fare un picnic vicino al fiume
a house on the river	una casa sul fiume
the room looks on to the courtyard	la stanza dà sul cortile
on top of	in cima di
on the left/right	a sinistra/destra
on board	a bordo (di)
on the train	sul treno
to travel on the train/on a bike	viaggiare in treno/bicicletta
on that train/bike (i.e. on a particular one)	su quel treno/quella bicicletta
on the second floor	al secondo piano
on the stairs	sulle scale/per le scale
on the ground	per terra/a terra
on the footpath/pavement	sul marciapiede
on this side	da questa parte
on the other side	dall'altra parte
on all sides	da tutte le parti
on page 50	a pagina 50
on the front page (of a newspaper)	in prima pagina
on his face	in faccia
on the mouth	sulla bocca

26.26.2 Expressing time

on 25 April	il 25 aprile
on Sunday	domenica
on Sundays	la domenica
on a cold winter's day	in un freddo giorno d'inverno
on weekdays	nei giorni feriali/lavorativi
on (GB: at) the weekend(s)	il weekend/il fine settimana
on this important occasion	in questa importante occasione
on his arrival	al suo arrivo
(payment) on delivery	(pagamento) alla consegna

26.26.3 In other expressions

on the telephone	al telefono
on radio/television	alla radio/televisione
BUT the cat is sitting on the television (set)	BUT il gatto è seduto sul televisore
on Channel 5	su Canale 5

on air	in onda
the song has come out on CD	la canzone è uscita su cd
on the Internet	su Internet
on the Web	sul Web [web]
we arrived on foot/horseback	siamo arrivati a piedi/cavallo
to go on a pilgrimage	andare in pellegrinaggio
they are on the way (of people)	sono in viaggio/per strada
they are on the way (of things)	stanno arrivando
on average	in media
on one condition	a una condizione
to go on tour	andare in tournée
to be on leave	essere in congedo/permesso/ferie
tell him on my behalf	digli da parte mia
he's on our side	lui è dalla nostra parte
shares quoted on the (Milan)	azioni quotate in borsa/sulla
Stock Exchange	piazza (di Milano)
on the agenda	all'ordine del giorno
congratulations on	mi congratulo (con te) per

26.27 out of

she went out of the room	è uscita dalla stanza
he is out of town	è fuori città/sede
she is out of the office	è fuori ufficio/sede
eight out of ten	otto su dieci
out of action	fuori servizio
out of work	senza lavoro, disoccupato
out of breath	senza fiato, trafelato (R2-3)
out of danger	fuori pericolo
out of the way	fuori mano, lontano
out of the way!	levati dai piedi! via!
out of <i>meaning</i> through = per	
out of kindness/love/envy	per gentilezza/amore/invidia
out of <i>meaning</i> without =	
senza	
out of petrol/sugar	senza benzina/zucchero

26.28 outside

the house is outside Rome	la casa è fuori Roma
the campsite is outside Lazio	il campeggio è fuori del Lazio
outside office hours	al di fuori dell'orario d'ufficio

26.29 over

clouds hung over the city	le nuvole incombevano sulla/sopra la città
he jumped over the table	ha saltato/scavalcato la tavola
over the sea	al di là del mare/oltremare
children over three years old	bambini sopra i tre anni/superiori ai tre anni (R3)
over a year ago	più di un anno fa
over dinner	a cena/a tavola
over the years	negli anni

26.30 past

just past the shop	poco dopo il negozio
he ran past the shop	ha passato il negozio correndo
she is past seventy	ha più di settant'anni
five past two	le due e cinque

26.31 round

we sat round the table	ci siamo seduti intorno alla tavola
we walked round the park (round the perimeter)	abbiamo fatto il giro del parco
we walked round the park (in the park)	abbiamo fatto un giro nel parco
he travelled round Italy	ha viaggiato in Italia/ha girato l'Italia
round the corner	dietro l'angolo

26.32 through

she walked through the wood/forest/countryside	ha attraversato il bosco/la foresta/la campagna a piedi
to look through a window	guardare da una finestra
canceled through illness	cancellato per malattia
I went through a red light	sono passato col rosso
all through her life	(per) tutta la vita

26.33 to

26.33.1 Expressing direction

to go to school	andare a scuola
(both in the sense of “to attend school” and “to be travelling to the school building”)	
The following expressions have the same two types of meaning:	
to go to church	andare in chiesa
to go to University	andare all’Università
to go to the bank	andare in banca
to go to work	andare al lavoro
to go to town	andare in città/paese/centro
to go to the office	andare in ufficio
to go to the doctor(’s)	andare dal dottore
to go to bed	andare a letto/coricarsi (R3)
to go to Heaven	andare in Paradiso/salire in cielo
to go to Hell	andare all’Inferno
to go to the moon/Mars	andare sulla luna/su Marte
to go to Brindisi	andare a Brindisi
to go to Italy	andare in Italia

For the Italian regions, the same rules apply as for the English preposition *in*. Thus:

**andare in Toscana, nelle Marche, in Veneto, in Piemonte,
nel/in Lazio**

to fall to the ground	cadere in/per terra
the bird fell to the ground	l’uccello è caduto per/a terra
he fainted and fell to the ground	è svenuto ed è caduto per/a terra
twenty to six	le sei meno venti/venti alle sei (R1)

26.33.2 In other expressions

to my surprise/delight	con mia sorpresa/gioia
to (the best of) my knowledge	per quel che ne so io/che sappia io
married to sb	sposato con qu
I told him to his face	gliel’ho detto in faccia
to my mind	a mio parere

26.34 towards

your kindness towards me	la tua gentilezza con me
your duty towards your parents	il tuo dovere verso i (tuoi) genitori

26.35 under

under the table	sotto il tavolo
children under three years old	bambini sotto i tre anni (R1–2)/ inferiori ai tre anni (R3)
under an hour	meno di un'ora
under age	minorenne
under consideration	in esame
born under the sign of Pisces	nato sotto il segno dei Pesci

26.36 until, till

until now	fino ad ora/finora
until then	fino ad allora
until 2002	fino al 2002
until the end of the month	fino alla fine del mese
until seven o'clock	fino alle sette
until after his death	fino a dopo la sua morte
I waited until seven o'clock	ho aspettato fino alle sette
he won't know until Saturday	non lo saprà prima di sabato/lo saprà solo sabato

26.37 up

we climbed up the hill	siamo saliti sulla collina
he walked up the street	ha camminato lungo la strada

26.38 with

come with me	vieni con me
I am angry with you	sono arrabbiato con te
with all my heart	con tutto il cuore
he lives with his mother	vive con sua madre
he lives with his girlfriend	convive con la (sua) ragazza
she wept with joy	pianse di gioia/per la (grande) gioia
covered with dust	coperto di polvere
together with	insieme con (R2–3)/ a (R1–2)

27 Prepositional constructions with verbs and adjectives

In sections 27.1 to 27.6, each verb is listed only once, under the preposition with which it is most commonly used. The existence of alternative usages is signaled by, e.g., (ALSO **di**), but the verb is not listed under the alternative prepositions. The index may be consulted to locate verbs if necessary. Verbs which permit different constructions that have different meanings are listed in section 27.7.

27.1 Verbs with no preposition before an infinitive

27.1.1 Infinitive as subject of the verb

In the sentence **Occorre scrivere**, the infinitive **scrivere** is the subject of **occorre**, just as in the sentence **Occorre una lettera**, the noun **una lettera** is the subject of the verb. When an infinitive is the subject of a verb, there is usually no intervening preposition. A number of these verbs are sometimes used with **di**, but this usage should not be imitated by the student.

affascinare (R2–3)	to fascinate
appassionare (R2–3)	to please greatly
bastare a qu	to be enough
bisognare a qu	to be necessary
convenere a qu	to be opportune
le conviene aspettare	she should wait
costare a qu	to cost

R1* vulgar or indecent

R1 informal,
colloquial

R2 neutral, unmarked

R3 formal, written

Italian words and
expressions are R2
unless otherwise
indicated. See also
p. 5.

dare fastidio a qu gli dà fastidio sentire discorsi retorici	to give annoyance it annoys him to hear rhetorical speeches
dispiacere a qu le dispiace attendere fuori?	to give displeasure do you mind waiting outside?
entusiasmare	to give enthusiasm
essere + NOUN e.g. è un peccato/la cosa più facile del mondo	to be (a pity/the easiest thing in the world, etc.)
essere + ADJ è necessario/possibile/vietato	to be (necessary/possible/ forbidden, etc.)
importare a qu esp non importa	to be of importance it isn't important
infastidire (R2-3)	to give annoyance
interessare a qu	to interest
occorrere a qu	to be necessary
piacere a qu	to give pleasure
rallegrare qu (R3)	to give joy
rendere + ADJ a qu la tua lettera (le) rende impossibile aiutarti	to make it impossible for sb to do sth your letter makes it impossible (for her) to help you
riuscire ONLY in the R2-3 construction riuscire a + qu + ADJ, e.g.:	
gli riesce difficile fidarsi di lei	it is difficult for him to trust her
rincrescere a qu (R2-3) le rincresce non poterti aiutare	to give sorrow she is sorry she can't help
ripugnare (R3)	to be repugnant
seccare a qu	to give annoyance
gli secca aspettare i ritardatari	it annoys him to wait for late-comers
servire a qu	to be of use
spettare a qu le spetta badare al bambino	to be the duty of it is up to her to look after the baby
toccare a qu gli tocca pagare per tutti a chi tocca (pagare)?	to fall to he has to pay for everyone whose turn is it (to pay)?
valere la pena (ALSO di) val la pena (di) chiedere il prezzo	to be worthwhile it is worth asking the price
venire + ADJ a qu le viene spontaneo pensare a lui al tramonto	she finds herself thinking of him at sunset

27.1.2 Infinitive as object of the verb

When the infinitive has the same function as a direct object, there is no preposition. Compare:

Preferisco camminare.

I prefer to walk.

Preferisco una passeggiata.

I prefer a stroll.

A number of these verbs used to take **di** in older forms of Italian but this is restricted to higher registers today and often sounds old-fashioned.

adorare (R2–3)	to adore doing sth
amare (R2–3)	to love to do sth
bramare (R3)	to long to do sth
desiderare	to desire to do sth
dovere	to have to do sth
gradire (R2–3)	to be pleased to
osare (R2–3)	to dare to do sth
potere	to be able to do sth
preferire	to prefer to do sth
sapere	to know how to do sth
sembrare	to seem
Matteo sembra dormire	Matteo seems to be sleeping
Tommaso sembra aver capito	Tommaso seems to have understood
essere solito (R3)	to be accustomed to doing sth
usare (R3)	to be accustomed to doing sth
uso andare a letto presto	I usually go to bed early
oggi usa uscire in compagnia	today one goes out in company
volere	to want to do sth

27.1.3 Verbs of perception

sento (qu) cantare	I hear (sb) singing
sento Tommaso cantare	I hear Tommaso singing
OR sento cantare Tommaso	
OR sento Tommaso a cantare	
(R1, South)	
sento cantare la canzone da/a Tommaso	I hear Tommaso sing the song OR I hear the song being sung by/to Tommaso
la sento cantare da/a lui	I hear him singing it
gli sento cantare la canzone	I hear him singing the song
gliela sento cantare	I hear him singing it
sento Tommaso cantare la canzone	I hear Tommaso singing the song
lo sento cantarla	I hear him singing it
mi fa piacere sentirgliela cantare	I am pleased to hear him sing it

vedo andare via Giuseppe	I see Giuseppe go away
vedo abbattere gli alberi	I see the trees (being) felled
vedo Giuseppe pentirsi delle sue parole	I see Giuseppe regret his words

27.1.4 Causative construction

faccio cantare Tommaso	I make Tommaso sing
lo faccio cantare	I make him sing
faccio cantare la canzone	I have the song sung
la faccio cantare	I have it sung
faccio cantare la canzone da/a Tommaso	I make Tommaso sing the song OR I get the song sung by Tommaso
la faccio cantare da/a lui	I get it sung by him
gliela faccio cantare	I make him sing it
faccio pentire Tommaso delle sue parole	I make Tommaso regret his words

27.2 di before an infinitive

With **di**, the infinitive is in the present if the action occurs at the same time or in the future with respect to the main verb; it is in the past if the action occurred prior to the main verb. (See also “Sequence of tenses,” chapter 29). E.g.:

Dice di essere d'accordo.

She says she agrees.

Dice di essere stata d'accordo fin dall'inizio.

She says she has agreed from the start.

27.2.1 The subject of certain “impersonal” verbs (cf. section 4.4)

These verbs often take a **che** clause + subjunctive, which is the subject of the verb. They may also take an infinitive clause with **di** when the logical subject of the two verbs is the same (see section 24.10 for this use with impersonal subjects), e.g.:

Gli sembra di aver capito (= Sembra che lui abbia capito)

It seems to him to have understood, i.e. He thinks he has understood.

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| (a) Verbs of seeming | |
| parere | to appear |
| risultare | to turn out |
| sembrare | to seem |
| (b) Verbs of happening | |
| accadere | to occur |
| capitare | to happen by chance |
| succedere | to happen |

essere dato di (R.3):	
non mi fu dato di incontrarla	I didn't happen to meet her
venire fatto di (R.3):	
mi venne fatto di trovare il documento cruciale	I happened to find the crucial letter
(c) Certain verbs used idiomatically	
andare (R.1–2)	to feel like doing sth
non gli va di uscire stasera	he doesn't feel like going out tonight
passare per la mente/testa (R.1–2)	to enter one's head
non le è passato per la mente di chiedere scusa	it didn't enter her head to apologize

27.2.2 Verbs of saying, promising, agreeing

These verbs take **di** + infinitive when the subjects of the two verbs are the same, and a **che** clause when they are different. Many of these verbs may also take a **che** clause with the same subjects to add weight to what is said, e.g.:

Gli ho promesso di farlo OR **Gli ho promesso che lo avrei fatto.**

I promised him I would do it.

Gli ho promesso che il mio amico l'avrebbe fatto.

I promised him my friend would do it.

accennare di	to hint that
accettare di	to accept to (do sth)
acconsentire di	to agree to (do sth)
affermare di	to state that
aggiungere di	to add that
ammettere di	to admit that
annunciare di	to announce that
asserire di	to assert that
confessare di	to confess that
consentire di (ALSO a)	to agree to (do sth)
decidere di	to decide to (do sth)
dichiarare di	to declare that
dire di	to say that
esclamare di	to exclaim that
giurare di	to swear that
lagnarsi di	to complain that
lamentarsi di	to complain that
meritare di	to deserve to (do sth)
negare di	to deny that
promettere di	to promise to (do sth)
raccontare di	to relate that
rischiare di	to risk (doing sth)
rispondere di	to reply that

scrivere di	to write that
stabilire di	to decide to (do sth)
svelare di (R2–3)	to reveal that

27.2.3 Verbs of mental states

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| (a) | Verbs of remembering and forgetting | |
| | dimenticar(si) di | to forget to (do sth) |
| | scordarsi di | to forget to (do sth) |
| | ricordar(si) di | to remember to (do sth) |
| (b) | Verbs of noticing and realizing | |
| | accorgersi di | to notice that |
| | realizzare di (R1–2) | to realize that |
| | rendersi conto di | to realize that |
| (c) | Verbs of knowing, pretending | |
| | far finta di | to pretend that |
| | ignorare di (R2–3) | not to know that |
| | sapere di | to know that |
| | scoprire di | to discover that |

27.2.4 Verbs of feeling, opinion, or will

- | | | |
|-----|--|--|
| (a) | Verbs of believing, doubting, hoping, suspecting | |
| | aspettarsi di | to expect to (do sth) |
| | contare di | to count on (doing sth) |
| | credere di | to believe that |
| | dubitare di | to doubt that |
| | immaginare di | to imagine that |
| | pensare di | to think that/to think about (doing sth) |
| | ritenere di | to claim that |
| | sognare di | to dream of (doing sth) |
| | sospettare di | to suspect that |
| | sperare di | to hope to (do sth) |
| (b) | Verbs of feeling, emotion | |
| | accontentarsi di | to be happy with (doing sth) |
| | aver paura di | to be afraid to (do sth) |
| | aver piacere di | to be pleased to (do sth) |
| | aver vergogna di | to be ashamed to (do sth) |
| | offendersi di | to be offended that |
| | pentirsi di | to regret (doing sth) |
| | non poterne più di (R1–2) | not to be able to (do sth) any more |
| | preoccuparsi di | to take care to (do sth) |
| | rallegrarsi di (R2–3) | to take pleasure in (doing sth) |
| | rammaricarsi di | to regret (doing sth) |
| | stupirsi di | to be amazed that |
| | temere di | to be afraid that |
| | vergognarsi di | to be ashamed to (do sth) |

(c) Verbs of wanting, planning, trying	
ardire di (R3)	to dare to (do sth)
aspettare di	to wait to (do sth)
augurarsi di	to hope that
cercare di	to try to (do sth)
godere di (ALSO a, nel)	to enjoy (doing sth)
mettersi in testa di (R1–2)	to get it into one's head to (do sth)
minacciare di	to threaten to (do sth)
parlare di	to talk about (doing sth in the future)
progettare di	to plan on (doing sth)
proporre di	to propose (doing sth)
riservarsi di (R3)	to reserve the right to (do sth)
risolvere di (R3)	to resolve to (do sth)
scegliere di	to choose to (do sth)
sentirsela di	to feel like (doing sth)
tentare di	to try to (do sth)
vedere di	to see to it that (sth happens)

27.2.5 Other verbs

(a) Verbs of ceasing	
cessare di	to cease (doing sth)
finire di	to finish (doing sth)
(non) mancare di	not to fail to (do sth)
smettere di	to stop OR give up (doing sth)
terminare di	to stop (doing sth)
evitare di	to avoid (doing sth)
lasciare di (R3)	to leave off (doing sth)
rifiutar(si) di	to refuse to (do sth)
stancarsi di	to get tired of (doing sth)
trascurare di	to neglect to (do sth)
(b) Other verbs	
aver bisogno di	to need to (do sth)
essere in grado di	to be able to (do sth)
permettersi di	to take the liberty of (doing sth)
sforzarsi di	to make an effort to (do sth)

27.2.6 Verb + direct object + **di** + infinitive

With all these verbs, the subject of the infinitive is the direct object of the main verb. If this direct object is “impersonal,” it is omitted (cf. section 24.10).

Li ho ringraziati di essere venuti.

I thanked them for coming.

Si prega di non fumare.

Please do not smoke (lit. One asks [people] not to smoke).

- (a) Verbs of telling or asking sb to do sth

The **di** + infinitive may be replaced in R2–3 by a **che** clause with the verb in the subjunctive, e.g.:

Ho pregato gli ospiti di entrare.

Ho pregato gli ospiti che entrassero.

I asked the guests to come in.

avvertire qu di (ALSO a)	to warn sb to (do sth)
implorare qu di (R2–3)	to implore sb to (do sth)
incaricare qu di	to entrust sb to (do sth)
pregare qu di	to beg sb to (do sth)
scongiurare qu di (ALSO a)	to beg sb to (do sth)
supplicare qu di (ALSO a)	to beg sb to (do sth)

- (b) Verbs of accusing, thanking

accusare qu di	to accuse sb of (doing sth)
rimproverare qu di (ALSO per)	to reprove sb for (doing sth)
ringraziare qu di (ALSO per)	to thank sb for (doing sth)

27.2.7 Verb + indirect object + **di** + infinitive

With all these verbs, the subject of the infinitive is the indirect object of the main verb. If this indirect object is “impersonal,” it is omitted (cf. section 24.10). The **di** + infinitive may be replaced in R2–3 by a **che** clause with the verb in the subjunctive, e.g.:

Ho chiesto all'ispettore di entrare.

Ho chiesto all'ispettore che entrasse.

I asked the inspector to come in.

NOTE **Ho chiesto che entrasse l'ispettore.**

I asked (someone else) for the inspector to come in, i.e. I asked for the inspector to be shown in.

- (a) Verbs of telling or asking sb to do sth

Note that with verbs of telling, the subject of the infinitive is understood to be the same as that of the main verb when the infinitive is in the past. Compare:

Gli ho detto di vedere quali alternative ci fossero.

I told him to see what alternatives there were.

Gli ho detto di non aver mai visto l'accusato (R2–3).

I told him that I had never seen the accused.

accennare a qu di (R3)	to beckon to sb to (do sth)
chiedere a qu di	to ask sb to (do sth)
comandare a qu di	to order sb to (do sth)
consigliare a qu di	to advise sb to (do sth)
dire a qu di	to tell sb to (do sth)
domandare a qu di	to ask sb to (do sth)
impedire a qu di	to prevent sb from (doing sth)
imporre a qu di	to force sb to (do sth)
ordinare a qu di	to order sb to (do sth)
proporre a qu di	to suggest to sb that they (do sth)
raccomandare a qu di	to recommend to sb to (do sth)

- (b) Verbs of allowing or forbidding

concedere a qu di (R2–3)

to concede permission to sb/allow sb to (do sth)

permettere a qu di

to permit sb to (do sth)

proibire a qu di

to forbid sb to (do sth)

vietare a qu di

to forbid sb to (do sth)

le hanno vietato di

they have forbidden her to go out after dinner

uscire dopo cena**le è stato vietato di**

she has been prohibited from going out after dinner

uscire dopo cena**BUT (è) vietato fumare** (cf.

no smoking

section 27.1.1)

27.2.8 Adjectives + **di** + infinitive

A large number of adjectives in Italian take **di** before a following infinitive. They refer to mood or mental state, or to ability. Some of these adjectives may take **per** to express cause. In many cases a **che** clause may substitute for the **di** + infinitive clause.

ansioso di

anxious to (do sth)

capace di

able to (do sth), capable of (doing sth)

certo di

sure to (do sth)

colpevole di

guilty of (doing sth)

compiaciuto di

pleased to (do sth)

consapevole di

aware of (doing sth)

contento di

happy to (do sth)

curioso di

curious to (do sth)

degno di

worthy of (doing sth)

disperato di (ALSO **per**)

desperate to (do sth)

dispiaciuto di (ALSO **per**)

sorry to (do sth)

felice di

happy to (do sth)

fiero di

proud to (do sth/of doing sth)

fortunato di (ALSO **a**)

lucky to (do sth)

grato di (ALSO **per**)

grateful to (do sth)

impaziente

impatient to (do sth)

incapace di

incapable of (doing sth)

incaricato di

charged with (doing sth)

irritato di

irritated at (doing sth)

libero di

free to (do sth)

lieto di

happy to (do sth)

onorato di

honored to (do sth)

responsabile di

responsible for (doing sth)

riconoscente di (ALSO **per**)

grateful to (do sth)

sicuro di

sure to (do sth)

soddisfatto di (ALSO **per**)

satisfied at (doing sth)

sorpreso di

surprised to (do sth)

stanco di	tired from (doing sth)
stufo di	sick and tired of (doing sth)

27.3 a before an infinitive

In keeping with the original meanings of **a** (see section 25.1.1), verbs and adjectives that take **a** before an infinitive often express some kind of movement, either physical or metaphorical, or a state or mental attitude. With **a**, the infinitive is always in the present tense, and is understood as referring to the same time as the main verb or to a subsequent moment in time.

27.3.1 Verbs that refer to the beginning, continuing, or ending of an action

attaccare a	}	to start (to do sth/doing sth)
cominciare a (ALSO col)		
incominciare a		
mettersi a		
ricominciare a		
riprendere a	}	
scoppiare a (usu piangere/ridere)		to burst out (laughing, crying)
continuare a	}	to go on (doing sth)
persistere a (R2–3)		
seguire a		

27.3.2 Verbs that express movement (literal or figurative)

affrettarsi a	to hurry to (do sth)
andare a	to go to (do sth)
arrivare a (fig)	to get to the point of (doing sth)
buttarsi a (fig)	to throw oneself into (doing sth)
correre a	to run to (do sth)
fermarsi a	to stop to (do sth)
giungere a (fig)	to reach the point of (doing sth)
passare a	to pass (by) to (do sth)
precipitarsi a	to rush to (do sth)
salire a	to go up to (do sth)
scendere a	to go down to (do sth)
tornare a	to go back to (doing sth)
venire a	to come to do sth
voltarsi a	to turn (round) to do sth

27.3.3 Verbs that express a mental attitude or disposition (e.g. state, tendency, or will)

abbandonarsi a	to give oneself to (doing sth)
abituarsi a	to get used to (doing sth)
accingersi a (R2–3)	to prepare to (do sth)
adattarsi a	to adapt oneself to (doing sth)
allenarsi a	to train to (do sth)
apprestarsi a (R2–3)	to prepare to (do sth)
attardarsi a (R2–3)	to linger to (do sth)
concentrarsi a	to concentrate on (doing sth)
contribuire a	to contribute to (doing sth)
decidersi a	to make up one's mind to (do sth)
divertirsi a	to enjoy oneself (doing sth)
esitare a (ALSO nel [R3])	to hesitate to (do sth)
essere tenuto a	to be required to (do sth)
far bene/male/meglio a	to do well/badly/better to (do sth)
fare presto a	to hurry to (do sth), to do sth easily
fare in tempo a	to be in time to (do sth)
farcela a (R1–2)	to manage to (do sth)
faticare a	to have difficulty in (doing sth)
imparare a	to learn to (do sth)
impegnarsi a (ALSO di)	to commit oneself to (doing sth)
insistere a (ALSO nel)	to insist on (doing sth)
limitarsi a	to limit oneself to (doing sth)
mirare a	to aim to (do sth)
prepararsi a	to get ready to (do sth)
prestarsi a (R2–3)	to offer to (do sth)
provare a	to try (doing sth)
rassegnarsi a	to resign oneself to (doing sth)
rinunciare a	to renounce (doing sth)
riuscire a	to manage to (do sth)
sbrigarsi a (R1–2)	to hurry to (do sth)
stentare a	to have difficulty in (doing sth)
tendere a	to tend to (do sth)

27.3.4 Verbs that express being or staying

essere a	to be in the process of (doing sth)
sono tutti a dormire	they are all sleeping
restare a	to stay (doing sth)
rimanere a	to stay (doing sth)
stare a (R1–2, cf. section 20.2)	to be (doing sth)
trovarsi a	to find oneself (doing sth)

27.3.5 Verb + direct object + **a** + infinitive

These verbs express helping, encouraging, or influencing a person (or, in some cases, thing) to do something.

abituaire qu a	to accustom sb to (doing sth)
aiutare qu a	to help sb (to) (do sth)
autorizzare qu a	to authorise sb to (do sth)
chiamare qu a	to call sb to (do sth)
condannare qu a	to condemn sb (to do/doing sth)
condurre qu a	to lead sb to (do sth)
convincere qu a	to persuade sb to (do sth)
costringere qu a	to force sb to (do sth)
esortare qu a	to exhort sb to (do sth)
incitare qu a	to incite sb to (do sth)
incoraggiare qu a	to encourage sb to (do sth)
indurre qu a	to induce sb to (do sth)
invitare qu a	to invite sb to (do sth)
mandare a	
mandare a chiamare qu	to send for sb
mandare a dire a qu	to send word to sb
obbligare qu a	to force sb to (do sth)
persuadere qu a	to persuade sb to (do sth)
portare qu a	to take sb to (do sth)
predisporre qu a	to predispose sb to (do sth)
programmare qc a	to program sth to (do sth)
sfidare qu a	to challenge sb to (do sth)
spingere qu a	to drive sb to (do sth)
spronare qu a (R2–3)	to urge sb to (do sth)

27.3.6 Verb + indirect object + **a** + infinitive

insegnare a qu a	to teach sb to (do sth)
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27.3.7 Adjectives + **a** and infinitive

Most Italian adjectives take **a** before an infinitive.

abile a (ALSO nel)	good at (doing sth)
abituato a	accustomed to (doing sth)
adatto a (ALSO per)	useful for (doing sth)
addetto a	responsible for (doing sth)
affaccendato (ALSO nel)	busy (doing sth)
attento a (ALSO nel)	careful to (do sth)
atto a (R2–3)	suitable for (doing sth)
buono a (R1–2, ALSO per, da)	
il cuoco è buono a fare la pasta	the cook is good at making pasta
la pasta è buona per sfamare i ragazzi	pasta is good for feeding young people

questa pasta è buona da mangiare	this pasta is good to eat
bravo a (ALSO nel)	good at (doing sth)
costretto a	obliged to (do sth)
deciso a (ALSO nel)	determined on (doing sth)
destinato a	destined to (do sth)
disponibile a	available to (do sth)
disposto a	prepared to (do sth)
efficace a (ALSO nel, per)	effective at (doing sth)
esitante a (ALSO nel)	hesitant in (doing sth)
forte a (R1–2, ALSO nel)	strong in (doing sth)
idoneo a	suitable for (doing sth)
incline a	inclined to (do sth)
intento a	intent on (doing sth)
interessato a	interested in (doing sth)
necessario a (ALSO per)	necessary for (doing sth)
occupato a (ALSO nel)	busy (doing sth)
preparato a (ALSO per)	prepared for (doing sth)
pronto a (ALSO da, per)	ready to (do sth)
prossimo a	close to (doing sth)
recalcitrante a (R2–3)	recalcitrant to (do sth)
riluttante a (R2–3, ALSO nel)	reluctant to (do sth)
sufficiente a (ALSO da, per)	sufficient for (doing sth)
valido a (ALSO per)	valid for (doing sth)
veloce a (ALSO nel)	quick at (doing sth)

NOTE: With the following adjectives, the verb in the infinitive has a passive meaning. In higher registers the adjectives take **a** (with the infinitive often reflexive), but in R1–2 the adjectives usually take **da**, e.g.:

La sua voce era bella a udirsi/udire (R2–3).

La sua voce era bella da udire (R1–2).

Her voice was beautiful to hear.

bello	beautiful
commovente	moving
difficile	difficult
facile	easy
impossibile	impossible
orribile	horrible
orribile a dirsi (R2–3)	<i>horribile dictu</i>
raro	rare
strano	strange
strano a dirsi	strange to say
terribile	terrible

27.3.8 a + infinitive in place of a **che** clause

This usage occurs with **avere, lasciare, trovare, sorprendere**. Cf. verbs of perception, section 27.1.3.

Elena ha trovato Tommaso a suonare il pianoforte.

= Elena ha trovato Tommaso che suonava il pianoforte.

Elena found Tommaso playing the piano.

It is also found in “cleft sentences” (see section 18.2). Note where the past tense is expressed:

Sono stati loro a dirmelo.

= Sono loro che me l’hanno detto.

It was they who told me.

It also occurs with **il primo, ultimo, solo, unico**, and with all ordinal numbers (cf. section 30.4), e.g.:

Tu sarai la prima/seconda/ultima/sola/unica a saperlo.

= Tu sarai la prima/seconda/ultima/sola/unica che lo saprà.

You will be the first/second/last/only one to know.

It also occurs with all cardinal numbers except one and generic quantifiers in the expression **essere (in) due** (etc.) **a**, e.g.:

Sono in quattro/mille/molti/pochi a saperlo.

= Sono quattro/mille/molti/pochi a saperlo che lo sanno.

There are four/a thousand/many/few people who know it.

27.4 da before an infinitive

Da before an infinitive can follow a verb, adjective, or noun. This construction expresses a consequence or an obligation.

27.4.1 After verbs

Da occurs with verbs of being and expresses compulsion. The **da** phrase may be the subject of the verb:

non c’è da vergognarsi/meravigliarsi there’s nothing to be ashamed of/surprised at

viene da chiedersi se lei sta/stia dicendo la verità one begins to wonder if she is telling the truth

mi veniva da ridere I felt like laughing

or it may be the predicate of the verb:

il film è da vedere/vedersi the film is to be seen
(R2–3)

restano/rimangono da fare tre cose three things remain to be done

mi restano/rimangono da fare tre cose I still have three things to do

For similar constructions with an indirect object, see section 32.1.1.

With several common verbs, **da** plus infinitive is used in such a way that a generic noun may be understood. This noun must sometimes be added to the English equivalent expression:

ho da fare I have work/things to do, I am busy
ci ha dato da pensare she gave us something to think about

sta facendo da mangiare	he's cooking
che c'è da mangiare/bere?	what is there to eat/drink?

27.4.2 After adjectives or adverbs

Da normally combines with **così, sì** (R3), **tale, talmente, tanto, abbastanza**. These words can sometimes be understood.

la proposta fu così/tanto intelligente da convincere tutti	the proposal was so intelligent as to convince everyone
---	--

ha agito in maniera strana, sì da destare sospetti (R3)	he acted strangely, such as to arouse suspicion
--	--

c'era una folla (tale) da farti star male	there was a crowd such as would make you feel unwell
--	---

è talmente evidente da non ammettere dubbi	it was so obvious as not to allow doubts
---	---

era abbastanza grande da/per capire certe cose	he was big enough to understand certain things
---	---

faceva un caldo da morire	it was terribly hot
----------------------------------	---------------------

27.4.3 After nouns

The expression **da** + infinitive may also be used as an adjective, immediately after a noun, e.g.:

è un film da vedere/vedersi (R2-3)	it's a film to see/be seen
--	----------------------------

27.5 **per** before an infinitive

Per before an infinitive can follow a verb, adjective or noun. It expresses purpose or cause.

27.5.1 After verbs

Per before an infinitive may occur after any verb, to express the purpose of the main verb. It corresponds to English *to, in order to*:

lavora per mantenere la famiglia	she works to support her family
---	---------------------------------

With verbs of movement which take **a** before an infinitive, a phrase with **a** implies that the two actions both took place, but a phrase with **per** is ambiguous as to whether the aim was realized or not. A change of auxiliary is also required with certain verbs (cf. section 22.4):

sono corso a vederla	I ran and saw her
ho corso per vederla	I ran to see her

With a past infinitive, **per** expresses cause, and corresponds to English *because* or *through*:

**si è ammalato per aver
inalato gas tossici**
**si è lamentato per/di non
aver ricevuto l'invito**

he fell ill through inhaling toxic
gasses
he complained because he had
not received the invitation

27.5.2 After adjectives or adverbs

Per combines with **troppo**:

**ho mangiato troppo per
poter dormire subito**
**lui è troppo giovane per
capire**

I've eaten too much to go to
sleep immediately
he is too young to understand

27.5.3 After nouns

Per is often equivalent to **da** (see section 25.12). However, stock phrases with **da** cannot be modified, whereas with **per** the verb can be modified as if in a normal sentence.

una macchina da/per cucire
**una macchina per cucire con
il filo d'oro**
**una macchina per cucire
lentamente**

a sewing machine
a machine for sewing with gold
thread
a machine for sewing slowly

27.6 con, da, in + article before an infinitive

When **con** and **in** come before an infinitive, they always combine with the definite article (masculine singular: **il** or **lo**); **da** also has this usage, with certain meanings. There are a few verbs that can only take one of these prepositions before an infinitive, but in most cases these articulated prepositions are an alternative to other constructions, and are used in higher registers.

For the use of the infinitive with articulated prepositions to form subordinate clauses, see section 32.2.1.

27.6.1 con

Con followed by an infinitive may usually be replaced by a gerund, and tends to occur with the pair of verbs indicated below. It corresponds to English *by* + gerund.

(in)cominciare col (ALSO per) to begin by (doing sth)
fare qc

finire col (ALSO per) fare qc to end up by (doing sth)

27.6.2 **da**

In keeping with the original meanings of **da** (see section 25.5), verbs and adjectives that take **da** before an infinitive often express some kind of distance, or beginning (i.e. moving away from something).

Verbs

astenersi dal	to abstain from (doing sth)
desistere dal	to desist from (doing sth)
diffidare qu dal (ALSO a)	to warn sb not to (do sth)
dissuadere qu dal	to dissuade sth from (doing sth)
guardarsi bene dal	to be careful not to (do sth)
morire dal ridere	to die laughing
scoraggiare qu dal	to discourage sb from (doing sth)
trattenersi dal	to stop oneself from (doing sth)

Adjectives

alieno dal	
often used in the negative, e.g.:	
non sono alieno dal	I'm inclined to agree
consentire	
lontano dal	
sono ben lontano dal	I certainly don't believe that . . .
credere che	
lungi dal	
sono lungi dal pensare una	I wouldn't dream of thinking
cosa simile	such a thing

27.6.3 **in**

Out of the three prepositions included here, this is the most commonly used in this construction. It corresponds to English *in, at, on* + gerund. The verbs, adjectives and nouns which take **in** express unity or skill or, rarely, state of mind:

Verbs

consistere nel	to consist of /lie in (doing sth)
essere nel	to lie in (doing sth)
esitare nel (ALSO a)	to hesitate (to do/in doing sth)
stare nel	to consist of /lie in (doing sth)

Adjectives

abile nel (ALSO a)	clever at (doing sth)
bravo nel (ALSO a)	good at (doing sth)
concorde nel	in agreement in (doing sth)

consistente nel fare qc	which consists in doing sth
gentile nel	kind in (doing sth)
il primo/ultimo nel (ALSO a)	the first/last to (do sth)
Also the expressions:	
essere d'accordo nel fare qc	to agree on doing sth
essere maestro/specialista nel fare qc	to be a maestro/specialist in doing sth

Nouns

difficoltà, fantasia, godimento, impassibilità, letizia, ritardo, sorpresa, etc., e.g.:

Non ho avuto nessuna difficoltà nel chiedergli di restituirmi le chiavi.

I had no problem in asking him to give back the keys.

27.7 Prepositional constructions

This section includes verbs followed by another verb, where different prepositions (or no preposition) are associated with different meanings of the main verb.

accennare	mi accennava di avvicinarsi she was beckoning to me to come nearer non accennava a cambiare idea (R2–3) she was showing no signs of changing her mind
ammonire (R3)	ammonì suo figlio di non frequentare più quella casa he advised his son not to frequent that house any more ammonì il suo amico a essere più pratico he exhorted his friend to be more practical
apprendere (R2–3)	ho appreso di essere stato proposto per il comitato I found out I had been nominated for the committee il bambino ha appreso a leggere e a scrivere the child has learned to read and write
aspettare	aspetta di vederlo! wait until you see him! aspetta a partire!

	don't leave yet!
	mi aspetto di vedervi alla cena
	I expect to see you at the dinner
avere	ho da fare
	I'm busy (lit I have [things] to do)
	ho da dirti una cosa
	I must tell you something
	ho una cosa da dirti
	I have something to tell you
	ebbe a dire che si dimetteva (R.3)
	(NOTE: <i>passato remoto</i> only)
	he happened to say that he was resigning
aver paura/ vergogna	avevo paura/vergogna di chiedergli i soldi che mi deve
	I was afraid/ashamed to ask him for the money he owes me
	avevo paura/vergogna a chiedergli i soldi che mi deve
	I felt afraid/ashamed as I asked him for the money he owes me
badare	bada di finire in tempo
	make sure you finish on time
	bada a fare il tuo lavoro
	you just get on with your work
bastare	per contattarmi, basta telefonare a questo numero
	to contact me, just phone this number
	è molto triste, e una cena fuori non basterà a rallegrarlo
	he is very sad and a dinner out won't be enough to cheer him up
cominciare	ha cominciato a servire il primo piatto alle otto
	he began to serve/serving the first course at eight
	ha cominciato col servire il primo piatto
	he began by serving the first course
compiacersi (R.3)	si compiaceva a stuzzicarlo
	she enjoyed teasing him
	il ministro si è finalmente compiaciuto di riceverci
	the minister finally deigned to receive us
consentire	questo gli consente di rimanere inattivo
	this allows him to remain inactive

	il comitato ha consentito a rivedere il caso the committee agreed to review the case
convenire	gli conviene tacere it is better for him to keep silent abbiamo convenuto di partire alle sette (R2–3) we agreed to leave at seven
decidere	Chiara ha deciso di partire Chiara has decided to leave Chiara si è decisa a partire Chiara has made up her mind to leave
determinare (R3)	ha determinato di perseverare he has resolved to persevere l'infarto ha determinato Giuseppe a cambiare vita the heart attack led Giuseppe to change his lifestyle mi sono determinato a confessare tutto I resolved to confess everything
disporre (R3)	il comandante dispose di partire (R3) the commandant decided to leave ha disposto i genitori a sentire la brutta notizia (R3) he prepared his parents to hear the bad news si è disposta a partire she prepared to leave
fare	in the expression Come fare a . . . , e.g.: come fai a conoscerlo? (R1–2) how come you know him? fece per uscire, ma lei lo fermò con lo sguardo he made as if to leave, but she stopped him with a look
finire	alle otto ho finito di mangiare at eight I finished eating c'era troppa gente in casa, e sono finito a studiare in giardino there were too many people inside, and I ended up studying in the garden finirai per farlo arrabbiare / finirai col farlo arrabbiare you'll end up (by) making him angry
insistere	insisteva di non conoscere nessuno degli imputati (R2–3) he insisted (that) he knew none of the accused

	ha insistito a salutare tutti: c'è voluta un'ora he insisted on saying goodbye to everyone: it took an hour insisteva per incontrarmi appena possibile (R3) he insisted he should meet me as soon as possible ha insistito nel dire che . . . he kept on saying that . . .
intendere	intendevo di trovarmi tra persone amiche (R3) I understood that I was among friends intendevo parlare con un amico I intended to speak with a friend
interessare	non mi interessa parlare del passato talking about the past doesn't interest me sono interessato a lavorare con voi I'm interested in working with you l'ho interessato a scrivere per quella faccenda (R3) I interested him in writing about that affair
lasciare	ho lasciato giocare i bambini tutta la mattina I let the children play all morning il tuo comportamento lascia a desiderare your behaviour leaves something to be desired
mancare	ho mancato a non dirtelo (R2-3) I was wrong not to tell you ho mancato di dirtelo I forgot to tell you
pensare	non pensa a sposarsi she is not thinking of/about marrying non pensa di sposarsi she doesn't think she will marry
persuadersi	si persuase di essere trascurato he became convinced that he was being ignored mi sono persuaso a comprarla I made up my mind to buy it
risolvere (R3)	ha risolto di raccontare tutto he resolved to tell everything si è risolto a raccontare tutto he came to the decision to tell everything
riuscire	non sono riuscito a finire il lavoro I couldn't (manage to) finish the job

sbagliare	non mi è riuscito di finire il lavoro it wasn't possible for me to finish the job ho sbagliato a seguire le tue indicazioni
	EITHER I was wrong to follow your instructions (i.e. I shouldn't have followed them)
	OR I followed your instructions incorrectly ho sbagliato nel seguire le tue indicazioni
servire	I followed your instructions incorrectly non serve gridare there's no point shouting questo bottone serve a chiudere il programma
stare	this button is for closing the program che stai a dire? (cf. section 20.2) what are you saying? non posso parlare adesso: sto per partire
tentare	I can't talk now: I am about to leave ho tentato di aprire il file, ma era corrotto I tried to open the file, but it was corrupt mi ha tentato a fermarmi un'altra settimana
vedere	he tempted me to stay another week ho visto quell'uomo prendere soldi dall'imputato I saw that man taking money from the accused
	non ce lo vedo proprio, Matteo, a lavorare senza paga (R1)
	I really can't see Matteo working for nothing
	vedrò di mandarti l'indirizzo in settimana
	I'll make sure I send you the address within the week
venire	se compri tutto, ti viene a costare un occhio if you buy everything, it will cost you an arm and a leg mi viene da piangere
	I feel like crying

27.7.1 No preposition in Italian: preposition in English

Verbs not listed above which take no preposition before a following noun but correspond to English verbs that do (cf. chapter 4):

approfondire qc	to go deeply into sth
approvare qc/qu	to approve of sth/sb
ascoltare qc/qu	to listen to sth/sb
aspettare qc/qu	to wait for sth/sb
calpestare qc	to trample on sth
cercare qc/qu	to look for sth/sb
chiedere qc (a qu)	to ask (sb) for sth
commentare qc	to comment on sth
compensare qc	to compensate for sth
BUT compensare qu di/per qc	to compensate sb for sth
disapprovare qc/qu	to disapprove of sth/sb
domandare qc (a qu)	to ask (sb) for sth
guardare qc/qu	to look at sth/sb
BUT guardare a qc/qu (R2–3)	to look to sth/sb
incendiare qc	to set fire to sth
operare qu	to operate on sb
pagare qc	to pay for sth (i.e. the thing bought), OR
	to pay sth (e.g. an account)
BUT pagare qu	to pay sb
ho pagato questa giacca cinquanta euro	I paid 50 euro for this jacket
OR ho pagato cinquanta euro per questa giacca	
pregare Dio, la Madonna, i santi	to pray to God, the Virgin, the saints
BUT pregare qu	to beg sb
piangere qc/qu	to weep for/over sth/sb
presiedere qc	to preside over sth
sbagliare qc	to make a mistake about sth
soffrire qc (e.g. caldo, fame)	to suffer from sth (e.g. heat, hunger)
BUT soffrire di una malattia	to suffer from an illness
sognare qc/qu	to dream of sth/sb
tacere qc	to keep silent about sth
vegliare qu	to keep vigil over sb (sick or dead)
BUT vegliare su qc/qu	to keep watch over sth/sb
votare qc/qu	to vote for sth/sb
BUT votare per qc/qu (R1–2)	to vote for sth/sb

27.7.2 Preposition in Italian: no preposition in English

Italian verbs which take a preposition before a following verb or noun but correspond to English verbs that do not:

abusare di qc	to abuse sth
abusare di qu , (see section 2.2)	
accorgersi di qc/qu	to notice sth/sb
adempiere a qc (R2–3)	to fulfil sth
ALSO adempiere qc	
appropriarsi di qc	to appropriate sth
assistere a qc	to witness sth
chiedere qc a qu	to ask sb for sth
congratularsi con qu (di qc)	to congratulate sb (for/on sth)
contravvenire a qc (R2–3)	to contravene sth
disporre di qc/qu	to have sth/sb at one's disposal
domandare qc a qu	to ask sb for sth
dubitare di qc/qu	to doubt sth/sb
esercitarsi a fare qc	to practice doing sth
fare bene a qc/qu	to benefit sth/sb
fare male a qc/qu	to hurt sth/sb
fidarsi di qc/qu	to trust sth/sb
giocare a qc (sport/game)	to play sth
giovare a qc/qu	to benefit sth/sb
influire su qc/qu	to influence sth/sb
BUT influenzare qu/qc	to influence sth/sb
rispondere a qc/qu	to answer sth/sb
servirsi di qc	to use sth
somigliare a qc/qu	to resemble sth/sb
ALSO assomigliare	
rassomigliare	
telefonare a qu	to telephone sb
ubbidire a qc/qu	to obey sth/sb
volere bene a qu	to love sb

27.7.3 Some prepositions which do not correspond in Italian and English

accontentarsi di qc	to make do with sth
chiedere di qu	to ask after sb
dipendere da qc/qu	to depend on sth/sb
perdonare qc a qu	to forgive sb for sth
ricordare qc a qu	to remind sb of sth
togliere qc a qu	to take sth from sb

28 Use of tenses

The main functions of the tenses in Italian are listed here under two major types of meaning: (i) temporal, referring to time – past, present, future; (ii) modal, referring to the speaker's attitude to what s/he is saying (command, opinion, politeness, etc.). The category of aspect, referring to how an action is viewed, relates only to certain tenses and will be discussed as necessary.

28.1 Present tense (faccio, vado)

<i>Temporal functions</i>	<i>Modal functions</i>
Any kind of PRESENT, including reference to a general state of affairs which includes the PRESENT, e.g.: Ti ascolto. I'm listening to you. Accetto con piacere. I accept with pleasure. Adesso so che fare. Now I know what to do. Oggi fa freddo. It's cold today.	INTENTION in FUTURE, e.g.: Se mi scassi la macchina, ti picchio. If you smash my car, I'll hit you. Mi fai un caffè? Will you make me a coffee? ABILITY in general present, e.g.: Parla tre lingue. She speaks three languages.

R1* vulgar or indecent

R1 informal,
colloquial

R2 neutral, unmarked

R3 formal, written

Italian words and
expressions are R2
unless otherwise
indicated. See also
p. 5.

<i>Temporal functions</i>	<i>Modal functions</i>
Arrivo sempre alle cinque. I always arrive at five. Il Po è il fiume più lungo d'Italia. The Po is the longest river in Italy. Come dice Dante nel <i>De Vulgari Eloquentia</i>, . . . As Dante says in the <i>De Vulgari Eloquentia</i>, . . . FUTURE (R1–2), e.g.: Domani andiamo al lago. Tomorrow we're going to the lake. L'anno prossimo ricorre il centenario della nascita dell'artista. Next year the artist's centenary will be/is being celebrated. IMMEDIATE PAST (especially R1), e.g.: Arrivo proprio adesso: cos'è successo? I've arrived just now: what's happened? PAST in narratives ("Historic Present"), e.g.: Ieri sera vado al cinema e chi vedo? Emilia! Last night I go to the movies and who do I see? Emilia! Ero fermo al semaforo, di colpo si avvicina uno, e fa "Dammi i soldi!" I was stopped at the traffic lights, suddenly a man comes up, and he goes "Give me your money!" PAST continuing to PRESENT (see section 25.5.2), e.g.: Vivo qui da due mesi. I've been living here for two months.	Da questa finestra si vedono le montagne. From this window you can see the mountains. IMPERATIVE (see also section 28.2 and chapter 30), e.g.: Adesso tu torni a casa e mi riporti le chiavi, capito? Now you go back home and bring me the keys, is that clear?

<i>Temporal functions</i>	<i>Modal functions</i>
PAST in minutes of meetings, e.g.: La riunione ha inizio alle 11.25. Il presidente dà il benvenuto ai nuovi componenti del comitato . . . The meeting opened at 11.25am. The Chair welcomed the new members of the committee . . . PAST in curriculum vitae, e.g.: Maria Rossi studia all'università di Roma dove si laurea nel 2002 con una tesi su . . . Maria Rossi studied at the university of Rome where she graduated in 2002 with a thesis on . . .	

28.2 Future tense (farò, andrò)

<i>Temporal functions</i>	<i>Modal functions</i>
FUTURE (but increasingly rare in R1), e.g.: Lo sapremo domani. We'll find out tomorrow. FUTURE in PAST (R3), e.g.: Conobbe un giovane deputato. Dieci anni dopo, egli diventerà Presidente del partito. He met a young member of parliament. Ten years later, he was to become President of the Party.	INTENTION, e.g.: Domani verrò senz'altro. I'll come tomorrow for sure. IMPERATIVE (see also section 28.1 and chapter 30), e.g.: Lo farai quando te lo dico io. You'll do it when I tell you. Non ucciderai (= non uccidere). Thou shalt not kill. SUPPOSITION in the PRESENT, e.g.: A quest'ora sarà a casa. At this hour he must be at home.

28.3 Future Perfect tense (avrò fatto, sarò andato)

<i>Temporal functions</i>	<i>Modal functions</i>
Anteriority in FUTURE, e.g.: Quando lo vedremo, avrò finito il lavoro. When we see him, I will have finished the job. Chiuderanno la sala dopo che tutti saranno usciti. They will lock the room after everyone has gone out.	SUPPOSITION anterior to the PRESENT, e.g.: A quest'ora sarà già uscito di casa. At this hour he must have left the house already.

28.4 Present Conditional tense (farei, andrei)

	<i>Modal functions</i>
	POLITENESS, e.g.: Vorrei due francobolli per l'Australia. I would like two stamps for Australia. Potresti prestarmi la penna? Could you lend me your pen? ALLEGATION of PRESENT action (made by third party, the speaker is non-committal), e.g.: Il Presidente sarebbe pronto a dimettersi. The President is said to be ready to resign. HYPOTHESIS in PRESENT or FUTURE (see section 31.1), e.g.: Ti aiuterei volentieri se potessi, ma . . . I would gladly help you if I could, but . . .

28.5 Conditional Perfect tense (avrei fatto, sarei andato)

<i>Temporal functions</i>	<i>Modal functions</i>
FUTURE in PAST, e.g.: Il dottore ha detto che sarebbe tornato domani. The doctor said he would come back tomorrow. Mi aveva promesso che sarebbe venuto ieri, ma non si è fatto vedere. He promised he would come yesterday, but he didn't show himself.	ALLEGATION of PAST action (made by third party, the speaker is non-committal), e.g.: Il Presidente avrebbe consultato i leader di tutti i partiti. The President is said to have consulted the leaders of all parties. HYPOTHESIS in PAST (see section 31.1), e.g.: Ti avrei mandato l'invito, ma ho perso il tuo indirizzo. I would have sent the invitation, but I lost your address.

28.6 Perfect tenses – *Passato Prossimo* and *Passato Remoto*

The *Passato Prossimo* (PP) and *Passato Remoto* (PR) are both Perfect tenses (see section 28.7). In general PR is being used less and less, especially in speech, and is being replaced by PP. The difference between these two tenses is complex and often subtle and cannot be explained by any single criterion. There are four parameters that may bear on the choice of tense.

- (i) *Regional differences*
In R1–2 speech, the two tenses are both in use in Central and Southern Italy, especially Tuscany. In the North, only PP is used (as the dialects have not used PR for some centuries); in the far South – Sicily, southern Calabria and southern Puglia – PR is in common use, though PP is gaining ground.
- (ii) *Type of language use*
PR is used more in writing than in speech. In a novel, PR may be used for the narrative and PP for direct speech.
- (iii) *Formality*
The more formal the situation, the more likely is the use of PR. Thus PR is widely used in R3 writing, and also in R2 but not if the writing is based on, or imitates, speech. In the spoken language, PR is generally used in the third person, to “tell the story,” while PP is used in the first and second persons, for reference to the people involved in the conversation.

(iv) *Distance in the past*

In general PR is used for events that are actually in the distant past or are felt as distant. In R3 writing, PR is used for actions considered as past events without any connection to the present, while PP is used for actions in a more recent time frame that includes the present. In central Italy, the two tenses may be used to express the “psychological” distance that the speaker feels from the events, e.g.:

Feci un colloquio ma non ebbi il posto.

I had an interview but I didn't get the job.

Ho fatto un colloquio e mi hanno assunto.

I had an interview and they hired me.

In the far South regions, PR was, until recent times, the only perfect tense in the dialects and so was used in Italian for all past actions, even in the very recent past. An oft-cited example is:

Dormisti bene? (first thing in the morning)

Did you sleep well?

This usage is receding.

Switching between the tenses

It is wrong to switch indiscriminately between the two perfect tenses. Whichever tense is chosen in a given situation must be maintained and should be changed only if there is some change in meaning, e.g.:

Lo conobbi a un ricevimento nel '68 e ieri, dopo tutti questi anni, l'ho rivisto per caso.

I met him at a party back in 1968 and yesterday, after all these years, I saw him again by chance.

28.7 Imperfect and Perfect

The term “Perfect” covers *Passato Prossimo* and *Passato Remoto*, since there is no difference between them in terms of their opposition to the Imperfect. The distinction between the *Imperfetto* and the two Perfect tenses is one of aspect, i.e. it concerns not the action in itself but how it is presented. Most actions or states can be referred to by either tense, depending on how the speaker views them or wishes to present them. Verb forms in English do not mark the distinction so clearly as in Italian, e.g. *would do*, *used to do*, *was doing* are imperfect, but *did* can be either perfect or imperfect. Compare the two meanings of *was* in the following:

Chi ha mangiato il Panettone? – Sono stato io.

Who ate the Panettone? – It was me.

Chi suonava il pianoforte stamattina alle 10? – Ero io.

Who was playing the piano this morning at 10? – It was me.

The Perfect expresses actions or states as individual, closed events in the past, irrespective of how long they took. The Imperfect expresses actions or states that happened in the past at the same time as something else,

stated or implied in the text: it says simply that they were taking place at a certain moment, without regard to their beginning or end. Compare:

La dominazione araba della Sicilia durò 250 anni, fino alla conquista normanna.

The Arab domination of Sicily lasted for 250 years, until the Norman conquest.

In quell'istante ho visto una donna davanti a casa mia. Stava in piedi e cantava . . .

In that instant I saw a woman outside my house. She was standing and singing . . .

In telling a story, the Perfect says what happened next, in the foreground, and moves the story forward. The Imperfect sets the scene and the background, and then interrupts the narrative flow to 'pause' the action for comment or descriptions, e.g.:

C'era una volta un pezzo di legno. Un giorno Mastro Ciliegia cercò di tagliarlo, ma il pezzo di legno pianse e si lamentò. Così lo regalò al suo amico Geppetto, che era molto povero e voleva farne un burattino. Quella sera anche lui cercò di tagliarlo . . .

Once upon a time there was a piece of wood. One day Maestro Ciliegia tried to cut it but the piece of wood wept and complained. So he gave it to his friend Geppetto, who was very poor and wanted to make a puppet out of it. That evening he too tried to cut it . . .

Two or more verbs in the Perfect usually refer to successive events. A verb in the Imperfect is usually understood as simultaneous to another verb, whether in the Imperfect or Perfect. Compare:

Quando Matteo è entrato, Chiara è uscita.

(Implies she left because he came in.)

Quando Matteo è entrato, Chiara usciva.

(Means that she was already leaving when he arrived.)

The Imperfect may express habitual actions, e.g.:

Quando Matteo entrava, Chiara usciva.

Whenever Matteo came in, Chiara would go out.

Tutte le domeniche, Tommaso si alzava tardi e faceva colazione al bar.

Every Sunday, Tommaso used to get up late and have breakfast at the bar.

With verbs of knowing, the meaning changes radically according to the choice of past aspect, e.g.:

Ho saputo la verità.

I learned/found out the truth.

Sapevo la verità ma ho taciuto.

I knew (was aware of) the truth but I kept silent.

Ho conosciuto tuo fratello ieri sera.

I met your brother last night (for the first time).

Conoscevo già tuo fratello ma non tua sorella.

I already knew your brother but not your sister (i.e. I was acquainted with him).

28.7.1 Imperfect tense: other uses

<i>Temporal functions</i>	<i>Modal functions</i>
PAST continuing to some point in the PAST (see section 25.5.2), e.g.: Vivevo lì da due mesi. I had been living there for two months. FUTURE in PAST (R1–2, cf. section 28.5), e.g.: Il dottore ha detto che tornava il giorno dopo. The doctor said that he was coming back the next day. Mi ha promesso stamattina che telefonava domani. He promised me this morning that he would phone tomorrow. PAST in R3 instead of Perfect, to confer high status to events so described, e.g.: Dante nasceva nel 1265. Dante was born in 1265. ALSO in sports journalism: Maldini pareggiava all'89°. Maldini equalized in the 89th minute.	POLITENESS, e.g.: Volevo chiedere una informazione. I would like to ask for some information. . . . , volevo dire, , I mean, . . . HYPOTHESIS in PAST (cf. section 31.1), e.g.: Potevi dirle tutto: ormai è troppo tardi. You could have told her everything: now it's too late. Se lo sapevo non ci andavo (R1). If I had known, I wouldn't have gone. HYPOTHESIS, esp in games (R1), e.g.: Facciamo che io ero il re e tu eri la regina. Let's say I am the king and you are the queen.

28.8 Pluperfect tense (*Trapassato Prossimo* – avevo fatto, ero andato)

<i>Temporal functions</i>	<i>Modal functions</i>
ANTERIORITY to PAST, e.g.: Dopo che tutti avevano mangiato, l'orchestra ha cominciato a suonare. After everyone had eaten, the orchestra began to play. PAST in PAST, e.g.: Ha detto che l'aveva già fatto. He said he had already done it.	HYPOTHESIS in PAST (cf. section 28.5), e.g.: Senza quell'incidente, a quest'ora eravamo arrivati. Without that accident, we would have arrived by now. PAST in POLITE REQUESTS (R1, replaces the Perfect), e.g.: Ti ricordi che ti avevo chiesto (= ho chiesto) la macchina per oggi? Potrei averla? You remember I asked you for the car today: could I have it?

28.9 Past Anterior tense (*Trapassato Remoto* – *ebbi fatto, fui andato*)

<i>Temporal functions</i>	
<i>Temporal function</i> Very rare, even in R3: in a temporal subordinate clause, ANTERIORITY to PAST expressed by <i>Passato Remoto</i>, e.g.: Quando tutti ebbero mangiato, l'orchestra cominciò a suonare. When everyone had eaten, the orchestra began to play. The following construction is restricted to literary fiction: Arrivata che fu, si sedette a capotavola. When she had arrived, she sat at the head of the table. Mangiato che ebbe la carne, bevve un calice di vino. When she had eaten the bread, she drank a goblet of wine.	

28.10 Modals

The modal verbs **dovere**, **potere** and **volere** express a variety of nuances which correspond to different English expressions. Here are some of the most important.

deve dormire	she must/has to sleep
deve aver dormito	she must have slept
ha dovuto dormire	she had to sleep (= was obliged to sleep)
doveva dormire	she had to sleep/used to have to sleep
	R1–2: she should have slept
doveva aver dormito	she had to have slept
aveva dovuto dormire	she had had to sleep, she had been obliged to sleep
dovrà dormire	she will have to sleep
dovrebbe dormire	she should/ought to sleep, she should be asleep
avrebbe dovuto dormire	she should have slept
può farlo	he can/may do it
può averlo fatto	he may have done it
ha potuto farlo	he managed to do it

poteva farlo	he could do it, he used to be able to do it
poteva averlo fatto	R1–2: he could have done it he could have done it (= it was possible that he did it)
aveva potuto farlo	he had been able to do it
potrà farlo	he will be able to do it
potrebbe farlo	he could/might be able to do it
potrebbe averlo fatto	he could have done it (= it could be that he did it)
avrebbe potuto farlo	he could have done it/he would have been able to do it
vuole lavorare	she wants to work
vorrà lavorare	she will want to work
ha voluto lavorare	she insisted on working
non ha voluto lavorare	she refused to work
voleva lavorare	she wanted to work, she used to want to work
vorrebbe lavorare	she would like to work
avrebbe voluto lavorare	she would have liked to work
vorrebbe aver lavorato	she would like to have worked/she wishes she had worked

29 Sequence of tenses

The term “sequence of tenses” – Italian grammars traditionally use the Latin expression *consecutio temporum* – covers the relationship between the tense of the verb in the main clause and the tense of the verb in a subordinate clause. In some cases the subordinate verb may be in the same tense as it would be if it were in a main clause, i.e. it simply refers to the time of the action or state being indicated. But in other cases the subordinate tense must be selected according to whether the action or state it refers to is simultaneous, preceding, or following, with respect to the action or state of the main verb.

29.1 Sequence of tenses in the indicative

When the verb of the subordinate clause is in the indicative, in most cases it may be in the same tense as if it were in a main clause (as is the case in English), e.g.:

La mostra aprirà all’inizio dell’anno prossimo.

The exhibition will open at the beginning of next year.

Il comitato ha deciso due anni fa che la mostra aprirà all’inizio dell’anno prossimo.

The committee decided two years ago that the exhibition will open at the beginning of next year.

The following exceptions should be noted:

- (i) When the main verb is in the *Passato Remoto*, the subordinate verb cannot normally be in the *Passato Remoto* but must be in a pluperfect tense, either *Trapassato Prossimo* or *Trapassato Remoto* (cf. section 28.8). However, the *Passato Prossimo* may be found in both clauses, e.g.:

R1* vulgar or indecent R1 informal, colloquial R2 neutral, unmarked R3 formal, written Italian words and expressions are R2 unless otherwise indicated. See also p. 5.

Allora Carlo ammise che Lucia non lo aveva insultato (NOT insultò).

Then Carlo admitted that Lucia had not insulted him/did not insult him.

Allora Carlo ha ammesso che Lucia non lo aveva insultato (OR ha insultato).

Then Carlo admitted that Lucia had not insulted him/did not insult him.

- (ii) The “future in the past” must be expressed by the Past Conditional, not the Present Conditional. It is important to note that while English uses both these tenses after a main verb in the past, with different meanings, the Past Conditional must always be used in Italian, e.g.:

Matteo ha detto che sarebbe venuto a trovarmi.

Matteo said that he would come to see me (implying the speaker believes Matteo will or might carry out his promise).

Matteo said that he would have come to see me (implying that it is no longer possible).

The future in the past may also be expressed by the Imperfect, especially in R1–2, and by the imperfect of **dovere**, eg:

Matteo ha detto che veniva a trovarmi.

Matteo said he was coming to see me/would come to see me.

Ho riflettuto a lungo su ciò che doveva succedere.

I thought for a long time about what was (about) to happen.

- (iii) In object clauses, the Imperfect is sometimes used, after a main verb in the past, to refer to situations that are true in the present, e.g.:

Allora è vero! Me l'aveva detto, Elena, che eri/sei malato.

So it's true! Elena had told me you were/are sick.

29.2 Sequence of tenses in the subjunctive

The choice of tense for verbs in the subjunctive in subordinate clauses depends on (i) the tense of the main verb (past or present/future) and (ii) whether the action or state of the subordinate clause is **simultaneous**, **preceding**, or **following** with respect to the main clause.

29.2.1 Main verb in the Present or Future

All four tenses of the subjunctive may be used, according to the meaning of the subordinate clause, e.g.:

Immagino che tu sia stanco.

I imagine you are tired.

Suppongo che Giuseppe conoscesse bene il problema.

I suppose Giuseppe understood the issue well.

Non so proprio dove sia andato mio fratello.

I really don't know where my brother has gone/went.

Mi domando ora dove Tommaso avesse conosciuto quel tipo.

I wonder now where Tommaso had met that bloke.

For reference to the future the Present Subjunctive or Future Indicative is used, e.g.:

Credo che Tommaso vada/andrà dal dentista domani.

I think Tommaso is going to the dentist tomorrow.

However, with main verbs which can imply only a future event, the Future is not used, e.g.:

Voglio che Tommaso vada dal dentista domani (NOT andrà).

I want Tommaso to go to the dentist tomorrow.

29.2.2 Main verb in the Past or Conditional

The Present and Perfect Subjunctive may not be used. If the action or state of the subordinate clause is simultaneous with the main clause, the Imperfect Subjunctive is used, e.g.:

Non sapevo dove andassero i miei amici.

I didn't know where my friends were going.

If the subordinate clause follows the main clause in time, the Past Conditional or Imperfect Subjunctive may be used, e.g.:

Non sapevo dove sarebbero andati/andassero i miei amici.

I didn't know where my friends would go.

If the subordinate clause precedes the main clause in time, the Pluperfect Subjunctive is used:

Non sapevo dove fossero andati i miei amici.

I didn't know where my friends had gone.

Note the following particular usages:

- (i) The *Passato Prossimo* acts like a true past tense if it refers to events or actions in specific moments in the past, but acts like a present tense if it refers to states set in periods of time which include the present, e.g.:

In quel momento ho sospettato che lei sapesse la verità.

At that moment I suspected that she knew the truth.

Ho sempre sospettato che lei sappia la verità.

I have always suspected that she knows the truth.

- (ii) The Present Conditional in a main clause requires the Imperfect Subjunctive in the subordinate clause. The Present Subjunctive is also often used and, though frowned on by critics, is becoming more common in R2, e.g.:

Non vorrei che domani ci fosse una barriera tra i due gruppi.

Non vorrei che domani ci sia una barriera tra i due gruppi
(R1–2).

I wouldn't want there to be a barrier between the two groups tomorrow.

- (iii) After **come se**, only the Imperfect and Pluperfect Subjunctive may be used, regardless of the tense of the main clause (cf. section 30.4.10), e.g.:

Parla come se non fosse convinta di quel che dice.

She is speaking as if she is/was/were not convinced of what she's saying.

Ti tratteranno come se non ti avessero mai conosciuto.

They will treat you as if they had never met you.

30 The Subjunctive

The Subjunctive mood is alive and well in contemporary Italian. Although in R1 and casual conversation it is often replaced by the Indicative, in more formal styles it is often compulsory (and its imperfect tense endings are very distinctive), and it must be mastered by the student at an advanced level. It appears to be used somewhat more in the North than in the South.

The Subjunctive appears both in subordinate clauses (as its English name suggests, though in Italian it is *congiuntivo*) and also in main clauses of many different types. In some cases the Subjunctive is compulsory and thus conveys no extra meaning in the sentence, while in others, the Subjunctive and Indicative express different meanings. In many other cases, both moods are possible and the difference between them is one of nuance or register.

It is impossible to give a definition of the Subjunctive that covers all its various uses. However, there are some features that account for the majority of uses and will help the student acquire a more confident mastery of this mood. The Subjunctive is, in many ways, the opposite or complement of the Indicative mood. Verbs in the Indicative usually make statements and denials and ask questions about matters that are assumed to relate to the world of reality. Verbs in the Subjunctive, on the other hand, may refer to exactly the same events or facts but not to these events or facts *in themselves*. They may be referred to as being part of the background reason why something else happened (usually in a subordinate clause); or they may be referred to as being presented from some particular point of view, that of the speaker or someone else; or they may not be real events or facts but rather wishes or imaginings on the part of the speaker.

R1* vulgar or indecent

R1 informal,
colloquial

R2 neutral, unmarked

R3 formal, written

Italian words and
expressions are R2
unless otherwise
indicated. See also
p. 5.

The many uses of the Subjunctive are grouped here according to the grammatical structure in which they occur and according to the meaning of those structures. Cases where the choice between Indicative and Subjunctive expresses different meanings are explained in full. Alternatives to the Subjunctive – especially the use of the infinitive – are also indicated.

30.1 The Subjunctive in main clauses

The Subjunctive is used in main clauses to express wishes, commands, and incredulous questions.

30.1.1 Wishes

Dio vi benedica!

(May) God bless you!

(Che) possiate avere tutto il successo che meritate!

May you have all the success you deserve!

Vinca il migliore!

May the best one win!

(Se) vedessi che roba!

If you could only see what it is!

(Magari) non l'avessi mai detto!

If only I had never said it!

30.1.2 Third person imperative

The subjunctive is used as the imperative with the **Lei** and **Loro** form of address, though **Loro** is rapidly being replaced by **voi** in modern Italian (cf. section 16.5), e.g.:

Dottoressa Rossi, venga (pure), s'accomodi!

(Please) come in, Ms Rossi, take a seat!

Dottori, vengano (pure), s'accomodino! (R3) = Venite, accomodatevi!

(Please) come in, take a seat!

30.1.3 Third person exhortations

The subjunctive is also used in exhortations said of a third person, including generic or impersonal subjects, e.g.:

Se non sono convinti, lo dicano!

If they are not convinced, let them say so!

Chi non ha ancora comprato il libro, venga avanti!

All those who have not yet bought the book, come to the front!

Che non si ripeta!

Let it not be repeated!

Costi quel che costi!

Whatever it costs!

30.1.4 Questions

The Subjunctive expresses surprise or scepticism, e.g.:

Che sia finito?

Is it over (I wonder)?

Che fosse geloso?

Could it be that he was jealous?

30.2 The Subjunctive in noun clauses

The Subjunctive may be used in noun clauses, depending on the meaning of the main clause. This meaning may be expressed in a verb or verbal expression or some other component of the main clause. This occurs with both subject and object noun clauses. In many cases, these noun clauses are replaced by **di** + infinitive when the subjects of the two clauses are the same, e.g.:

Temo che tu l'abbia offeso.

I am afraid you have offended him.

Temo di averlo offeso.

I am afraid I have offended him.

30.2.1 With main clauses expressing emotion

The Subjunctive is used after main clauses expressing emotion, regardless of the truth or otherwise of the subordinate clause. If the two subjects are the same, an infinitive is used, preceded by **di**.

(i) *Verbs/expressions*

essere contento/scontento che

to be pleased/displeased
that

essere felice/infelice che

to be happy/unhappy that

essere deluso che

to be disappointed that

essere sorpreso/stupito che

to be surprised that

aver paura che

to be afraid that

meravigliarsi che

to be amazed that

rammaricarsi che

to regret that

dispiacere, rincrescere che

to be sorry that

mi dispiace/rincresce che . . .

I am sorry that

stupirsi che

to be surprised that

temere che

to fear that

(ii) *Expressions*

meno male che (Indicative in R1–2)

just as well that

che peccato che

what a pity that

30.2.2 With main clauses expressing opinion, doubt, uncertainty, or certainty

(a) *With verbs and expressions of opinion and belief*

The Subjunctive is usual, though the Indicative is often used in casual speech. The Subjunctive is even more likely to be used if the verbs are in the negative.

ammettere che	to suppose that
credere che	to believe that
desumere che (R3)	to infer that
essere certo/sicuro che	to be sure/certain that
essere convinto che	to be convinced that
immaginar(si) che	to imagine that
intuire che	to intuit that
pensare che	to think that
ritenere che	to maintain that
sembrare	to seem that
mi sembra che	it seems to me
sostenere che	to claim that
supporre che	to suppose that

NOTE Statements of religious belief usually take the Indicative, but in the negative take the Subjunctive, e.g.:

Credo che Dio esiste.

I believe that God exists.

Non credo che Dio esista.

I do not believe that God exists.

(b) *With verbs and expressions of certainty and conviction*

The Subjunctive is used with such expressions in the negative and interrogative, and in the affirmative is often used, in R3, when the subject of the verb is the first person, e.g.:

Non sono convinto che la sua interpretazione sia giusta.

I am not convinced that her interpretation is right.

Sono convinto che volessero solo scherzare (R3).

I am convinced they only wanted to play a joke.

essere sicuro/certo che	to be sure that
essere convinto che	to be convinced that
non aver dubbi che	to have no doubt that

30.2.3 With main clauses expressing knowing and understanding

The Subjunctive is often used in the negative, and especially with reference to the past, e.g.:

Non sanno che Elena è già partita.

They don't know that Elena has already left.

Non sapevano che Elena fosse già partita.

They didn't know that Elena had already left.

capire/comprendere che	to understand that
rendersi conto che	to realize that
sapere che	to know that

With the following “negative” verb, the Subjunctive is always used:

ignorare che	to be unaware that
---------------------	--------------------

NOTE when **capire** and **comprendere** mean “quite understand” they take the Subjunctive, even in the affirmative, e.g.:

Capisco che Matteo sia molto impegnato, ma non può liberarsi per almeno mezz’ora?

I perfectly appreciate that Matteo is very busy, but can’t he get away for at least half an hour?

30.2.4 Saying

The Subjunctive may be used (especially in R3) after verbs of saying in the negative, e.g.:

Il ministro non ha dichiarato che le sculture debbano essere restituite.

The minister did not declare that the sculptures must be returned.

affermare che	to state that
asserire che (R3)	to assert that
dichiarare che	to declare that
dire che	to say that

With the following “negative” verbs of saying, the Subjunctive is always used:

escludere che (R2–3)	to refuse to admit that
negare che	to deny that
rifiutare che	to reject that

NOTE With **si dice**, the Subjunctive expresses hearsay, while the Indicative merely reports that something is being said:

Si dice che il ragazzo si sia messo con una brutta compagnia.

It is said that the boy has got into bad company.

30.2.5 Illusion, dream, and pretense

far finta/fingere che (R3)	to pretend that
illudersi che	to delude oneself that
immaginarsi che	to imagine that
mettere il caso che	to suppose that
sognare che	to dream that

30.2.6 With main clauses expressing wanting

If the subjects of the two clauses are the same the verb in the subordinate clause will be in the infinitive; if they are different the subjunctive is used, e.g.:

Volete che vengano a trovarci?

Do you want them to come and see us?

Tommaso non vedeva l'ora che cominciassero le vacanze.

Tommaso couldn't wait for the holidays to begin.

volere	to want
desiderare	to want
preferire	to prefer
non vedere l'ora	to be unable to wait (for)

30.2.7 Permission and prohibition

permettere che	to permit
OR permettere a qu di + infinitive	
evitare che	to avoid
vietare che	to forbid
OR vietare a qu di + infinitive	
impedire che	to prevent
OR impedire a qu di + infinitive	
proibire che	to prohibit
OR proibire a qu di + infinitive	

30.2.8 With impersonal verbs

Most impersonal expressions require a following Subjunctive if followed by a **che** clause. This construction is common when referring to a specific person. When making general statements, or when it is clearly understood who is being referred to, they often take an infinitive (cf. section 27.1). In this case, all the verbs in the following list may be used with an indirect object pronoun specifying the person concerned, with the exception of **bisogna** and **vale la pena**, which are only used for general statements, e.g.:

Conviene viaggiare in prima classe se uno se lo può permettere.

It is better to travel first class, if one can afford it.

Conviene che tu prenda il treno delle quattro (R2–3).

Ti conviene prendere il treno delle quattro (R1–2).

It is better for you to catch the four o'clock train.

Bisogna che tu dica qualcosa per spiegare le tue azioni.

You must say something to explain your actions.

Bisogna dire qualcosa (NOT ti bisogna dire qualcosa).

Something must be said, lit it is necessary to say something.

basta che	it is enough that
bisogna che	it is necessary that
conviene che	it is opportune that
dà fastidio che	it gives annoyance that
dispiace che	it gives displeasure that

mi dispiace che il lavoro	I am sorry the work is not
non sia pronto	ready
far piacere che	it gives pleasure that
mi fa piacere che tu sia qui	I am pleased that you are here
importa che	it is of importance that
infastidisce che	it gives annoyance that
occorre che	it is necessary that
piace che	it gives pleasure that
non mi piace che tu vada lì	I don't like your going there
può darsi che	maybe
rincesce che	it gives sorrow that
secca che	it gives annoyance that
sembra che	it seems that
sorprende che	it is surprising that
vale la pena che	it is worthwhile that

Many expressions with **essere** + noun or adjective usually take the Subjunctive after **che**, but may take an infinitive, especially where no person is specified, e.g.:

è (un) peccato che	it is a pity that
è ora/tempo che	it is a time that
è una vergogna che	it is a disgrace that
è necessario che	it is necessary that
è ridicolo che	it is ridiculous that
è vietato che	it is forbidden that
è possibile/impossibile che	it is possible/impossible that
è probabile/improbabile che	it is probable/improbable that
è facile/difficile che	it is likely/unlikely that
è utile/inutile che	it is useful/useless that
è naturale che	it is natural that
è inevitabile che	it is inevitable that

Impersonal expressions expressing “evident” or “certain” usually take the Indicative, but may take the Subjunctive in higher registers. The Subjunctive is especially common in negative sentences (even when the meaning is positive) and in questions, e.g.:

Ormai era ovvio che Elena fosse scappata (R3).

By now it was clear that Elena had run away.

Non è vero che si mangi sempre meglio nei ristoranti di lusso.

It is not true that you always eat better in luxury restaurants.

Non c'è dubbio che il colpevole sia lui.

There is no doubt that he is the guilty one.

Ma è davvero così evidente che abbiano copiato?

Is it really so obvious that they cheated?

With impersonal verbs meaning “to happen,” the Subjunctive is more likely if the “happening” verb is in the present or imperfect, less likely if it is in a perfect tense, e.g.:

Spesso capitava che si trovassero soli ma senza niente da dirsi.

It often happened that they ended up alone but with nothing to say.

Capitò che scambiai (OR scambiassi) qualche parola con lui durante una pausa dei lavori.

It so happened that I exchanged a few words with him during a break in the job.

The expression **non è che** or **non che** usually takes the subjunctive, and is often followed by a second clause in the affirmative with the verb in the indicative (cf. **non perché**, section 30.4.3), e.g.:

Non è che il bambino sia cattivo, è semplicemente vivace.

It's not that the child is naughty, he's just lively.

30.2.9 The verb **aspettare**

Aspettate che piova!

Wait until it rains!

Aspettate che piove!

Wait! It's raining!

30.2.10 The position of the noun clause

When a noun clause is moved from its usual position for emphasis (cf. section 18.2), whether it is subject or object of the verb, it requires the Subjunctive in higher registers, e.g.:

Che fosse medico lo sapevamo già.

Lo sapevamo già, che fosse medico.

Cf. **Sapevamo già che era medico.**

We already knew he was a doctor.

Che fosse medico si sapeva.

Cf. **Si sapeva che era medico.**

It was well known that he was a doctor.

30.2.11 **il fatto che**

A noun clause introduced by **il fatto che** is often in the Subjunctive, especially if it comes before the main verb of the sentence, e.g.:

Il fatto che Giovanni sappia tutto non cambia niente.

The fact that Giovanni knows everything doesn't change a thing.

30.2.12 **come** meaning **che**

The Subjunctive is used with **come** when it means "that" rather than "how" (a usage typical of higher registers), e.g.:

Il ministro fece notare come governo e opposizione fossero d'accordo sui principi di base della riforma.

Cf. **Il ministro fece notare che governo e opposizione erano d'accordo sui principi di base della riforma.**

The Minister observed that the government and the opposition were in agreement on the basic principles of the reform.

30.2.13 Modal attraction

The Subjunctive may be used in a noun clause which follows another subordinate containing a Subjunctive. This is only usually found in higher registers and should be imitated with caution, e.g.:

Se tu sapessi che io fossi in bisogno, mi aiuteresti?

If you knew I was in need, would you help me?

30.3 Indirect questions

The Subjunctive is used in higher registers, e.g.:

Gli chiesi se ci avesse pensato sopra.

I asked him if he had thought about it.

Non sappiamo se ci abbiano visti o meno.

We don't know if they have seen us or not.

Le ho domandato dove avessero trovato le castagne.

I asked her where they had found the chestnuts.

Non è chiaro che cosa abbia spinto il comune a comportarsi in questa maniera.

It is not clear what led the Council to behave like this.

Non so che faccia abbia.

I don't know what she looks like.

The Subjunctive is also frequent with **quanto**, e.g.:

Fece così per ricordare a Peppone quanto forti fossero le sue mani (Guareschi).

He acted like that to remind Peppone how strong his hands were.

The Subjunctive is also used in higher registers for reported or indirect commands, e.g.:

Rispose che venissi subito.

He answered that I should come immediately.

Gli fece cenno che si sedesse.

She gestured to him to sit down.

30.4 Subordinating conjunctions

With a large number of conjunctions, the Subjunctive is compulsory in higher registers. In R1, some of these conjunctions are rarely heard, and when they are they may be found with the Indicative.

30.4.1 although, however

Subjunctive after **benché, sebbene, quantunque** (R3), **con tutto che** (R3); Indicative after **anche se**, e.g.:

Sebbene non possedesse un orologio, sembrava sapere sempre l'ora esatta.

Although he didn't own a watch, he always seemed to know the right time.

Subjunctive after **per quanto** meaning *however*, and with (**per**) + adj + **che**:

Per quanto gridasse, nessuno l'ha sentito.

No matter how much he shouted, no one heard him.

Un vino Chianti, (per) cattivo che sia, è sempre un piacere.

A Chianti wine, bad as it may be, is always a pleasure.

Subjunctive or Indicative after **per quanto** meaning "as far as,"

Indicative after **per quel che**, e.g.:

Per quanto ne sappia (R2-3)/ so (R1-2) io, non hanno intenzione di vendere.

As far as I know, they have no intention of selling.

Per quanto mi riguarda/ per quel che mi riguarda . . .

As far as I am concerned . . .

Note this expression:

che io sappia

as far as I know

30.4.2 before

Subjunctive after **prima che** if subjects of the two clauses are different; if they are the same, **prima di** + infinitive, e.g.:

Mi tradirai tre volte prima che il gallo canti.

You will deny me three times before the cock crows.

Ha letto il contratto prima di firmarlo.

He read the contract before he signed it/before signing it.

30.4.3 in order that, such that

Subjunctive after **perché, affinché, tale che; in modo (tale) che, in maniera (tale) che**.

Indicative after **perché** meaning "because". Subjunctive after **non perché**.

If subjects of the two clauses are the same, **per, al fine di, tale da, così da, in modo (tale) da**, all + infinitive, e.g.:

Parlo così perché gli studenti mi capiscano.

I'm speaking like this so the students (will) understand me.

Parlo così perché gli studenti lo preferiscono.

I'm speaking like this because the students prefer it.

Devi firmare qui, non perché io non mi fidi di te, ma perché è la legge.

You have to sign here, not because I don't trust you, but because it is the law.

Si comporta in maniera (tale) che tutti lo guardino.

He is behaving in such a way that everyone will look at him.

Si comporta in maniera (tale) che tutti lo guardano.

He is behaving in such a way that everyone is looking at him.

Si comporta in maniera (tale) da provocare uno scandalo.

He is behaving in such a way as to cause a scandal.

Verbs and expressions of making something happen also require the Subjunctive, e.g.:

Il terremoto fece sì che il palazzo crollasse.

The earthquake led to the palace collapsing.

30.4.4 unless, except

Subjunctive after **a meno che, salvo che, tranne che, eccetto che**; if subjects of the two clauses are the same, **a meno di** + infinitive (in both cases the use of pleonastic **non** is typical of higher registers), e.g.:

Andate, allora, a meno che (non) abbiate cambiato idea di nuovo.

Off you go, then, unless you've changed your minds again.

Non lo farò, a meno di (non) capire il perché.

I won't do it, unless I understand the reason why.

30.4.5 until

Subjunctive after **finché non** meaning "until" in the past;

Indicative after **finché non** meaning "until" in the present or future;

Indicative after **finché** meaning "as long as," e.g.:

Il dottore mi ordinò riposo assoluto finché non mi fossi sentito meglio.

The doctor ordered me to have total rest until I felt better.

Non uscirai finché non avrai lavato i piatti.

You're not going out until you've washed the dishes.

Il dottore mi ordinò riposo assoluto finché continuava il dolore.

The doctor ordered me to have total rest as long as the pain continued.

30.4.6 without

Subjunctive after **senza che**; if subjects of the two clauses are the same, **senza** + infinitive, e.g.:

Uscì senza che nessuno la vedesse.

She went out without anyone seeing her.

Uscì senza salutare nessuno.

She left without saying goodbye to anyone.

30.4.7 provided that

Subjunctive after **purché, a patto che, a condizione che**.

If subjects of the two clauses are the same, **a patto di** + infinitive, e.g.:

Lo farò, a patto che tu dia una mano.

I'll do it, provided you give me a hand.

Accetto, a patto di cominciare subito.

I accept, provided I start immediately.

Note this construction:

Andiamo a mangiare la pizza? Ma mi raccomando: una pizza che sia una pizza!

Shall we go and have a pizza? Yes, but provided it's a real pizza!

30.4.8 in case, in case that

Subjunctive after **caso mai** (usually Imperfect or Pluperfect); **nel caso che, per il caso che, qualora**, e.g.:

Prendi un ombrello, caso mai piovesse.

Take an umbrella, (just) in case it rains/should rain.

Nel caso che tu non possa venire, avvertimi.

If (it happens that) you can't come, let me know.

30.4.9 when

Subjunctive to express hypothetical situation (cf. section 31.1.2). Only in higher registers, e.g.:

La notizia diffamatoria, pubblicata a mezzo stampa, può non costituire illecito quando prevalga l'interesse pubblico . . .

A defamatory news item, when published in the press, may not constitute an offense, when the public interest prevails . . .

30.4.10 as if

Subjunctive after **come se, quasi che** (R2–3), **come** (R3), **quasi** (R3). Only the Imperfect or Pluperfect Subjunctive are generally used (cf. section 29.2.2), e.g.:

Ci tratta come se fossimo ragazzini.

He treats us as if we were kids.

Erano spaventati come se avessero visto un fantasma.

They were frightened as if they had seen a ghost.

“As if to” = **come per** + infinitive, e.g.:

Apri la bocca come per parlare.

He opened his mouth as if to speak.

30.5 Relative clauses

30.5.1 After an indefinite antecedent

The Subjunctive accentuates the doubt that such a situation may in fact exist:

Cercano un albergo che costi meno di 100 euro a notte (R2–3).

Cercano un albergo che costa meno di 100 euro a notte.

They are looking for a hotel that costs less than 100 euro a night.

The Indicative is used to refer to real situations:

Hanno trovato un albergo che costa meno di 100 euro a notte.

They have found a hotel that costs less than 100 euro a night.

30.5.2 After a negative or non-existent antecedent

The Subjunctive is required, especially in higher registers, e.g.:

Non c'è nessuno che s'intenda di queste cose.

There is no one who understands this stuff.

Conoscete qualcuno che sia veramente felice?

Do you know anyone who is truly happy?

Una persona che passasse in macchina a quell'ora vedrebbe tutto.

Someone (anyone) who drove by at that time would see everything.

30.5.3 After unique and superlative antecedents

The Subjunctive is required in higher registers, while the Indicative is increasingly common in R1–2, e.g.:

Giuseppe è il solo/l'unico che capisca la mia situazione.

Giuseppe is the only person who understands my situation.

Elena è la persona più affascinante che io abbia mai conosciuto.

Elena is the most fascinating person I have ever met.

30.5.4 Expressing a hypothesis (cf. section 31.1.2)

Un mondo in cui/dove tutti fossero uguali sarebbe il paradiso.

A world in which/where everybody was equal would be paradise.

30.5.5 “Modal attraction”

The Subjunctive may be used in a relative clause which follows another subordinate containing a Subjunctive. This is usually found only in higher registers and should be imitated with caution, e.g.:

Credo che vi siano poche persone che possano capirmi meglio di voi.

I believe there are few people who can understand me better than you [do].

30.6 Comparatives

The Subjunctive is used in comparative clauses, especially after certain conjunctions of comparison (cf. section 17.3), e.g.:

Tommaso sa più di quanto (non) mi abbia detto (R2–3)/ di quanto mi ha detto.

Tommaso knows more than what he has said to me.

Sembrava più vecchio che non fosse in realtà (R3).

He looked older than he actually was.

30.7 Conditional sentences

The Imperfect and Pluperfect Subjunctive are used in the if-clause (the “protasis”) of hypothetical conditional sentences when the conditional is used in the main clause (cf. section 31.1.1), e.g.:

Se io parlassi quattro lingue, avrei avuto quel lavoro.

If I spoke four languages, I would have got that job.

Se tu mi avessi scritto quella lettera, io sarei già in vacanza.

If you had written that letter for me, I would already be on holiday.

An if-clause may be used alone, in certain expressions, when the main clause is understood, e.g.:

Che emozione, manco avessi visto Maldini! (R1–2).

What a thrill, it was better than seeing Maldini! (lit [it would not have been better if] I had seen Maldini).

31 Conditional sentences

Conditional sentences consist basically of an if-clause (or “protasis”) and a main clause (or “apodosis”), although many variations are possible. It is more common for the if-clause to come first, as in the examples below, but in principle the two clauses may occur in either order. Conditional sentences can be divided into hypothetical conditionals and factual conditionals.

31.1 Hypothetical conditionals

These sentences express a hypothesis, consisting of a condition and a consequence resulting from the fulfillment of that condition: “if x, then y.” The choice of mood and tense of the verbs in the two clauses reflects the degree of probability the speaker attaches to the likelihood that the hypothesis may come true. The indicative emphasizes that the hypothesis is in fact possible, while the subjunctive and conditional highlights the speculative or unreal nature of the hypothesis.

31.1.1 Verb mood and tense

Indicative in both clauses

The present, future, and *passato prossimo* may be used to express a hypothesis about present, future or past, e.g.:

Se compri il giornale, possiamo vedere cosa c'è alla televisione.

If you buy the newspaper, we can see what's on TV.

R1* vulgar or indecent R1 informal, colloquial R2 neutral, unmarked R3 formal, written Italian words and expressions are R2 unless otherwise indicated. See also p. 5.

Se domani ci sarà (c'è, R1–2) bel tempo, andremo (andiamo, R1–2) al mare.

If it's fine tomorrow, we'll go to the beach.

Se Chiara non è venuta all'appuntamento stamattina, allora è già partita per le vacanze.

If Chiara didn't keep the appointment this morning, then she has already gone on holiday.

Subjunctive/conditional

(i) If-clause

IMPERFECT SUBJUNCTIVE expresses a hypothesis about the present or future, e.g.:

Se io non fossi così testardo . . .

If I weren't so stubborn . . .

Se piovesse domani . . .

If it rained tomorrow . . .

Dovere may be used to underline the hypothetical nature of the clause, especially R2–3, e.g.:

Se dovesse piovere domani . . .

If it were to rain tomorrow . . .

PLUPERFECT SUBJUNCTIVE expresses a hypothesis about the past (therefore usually something that can no longer be true), e.g.:

Se tu fossi stata qui . . .

If you had been here . . .

(ii) Main clause

PRESENT CONDITIONAL expresses a consequence in the present or future, e.g.:

. . . non mi troverei in questo pasticcio.

. . . I wouldn't be in this mess.

PAST CONDITIONAL expresses a consequence in the past, e.g.:

. . . avrei accettato l'invito

. . . I would have accepted the invitation.

These two pairs may be combined freely, according to the meaning, e.g.:

Se io non fossi così testardo, non mi troverei in questo pasticcio.

If I weren't so stubborn, I wouldn't be in this mess.

Se io non fossi così testardo, avrei accettato l'invito.

If I weren't so stubborn, I would have accepted the invitation.

Se tu fossi stata qui, non mi troverei in questo pasticcio.

If you had been here, I wouldn't be in this mess.

Se tu fossi stata qui, avrei accettato l'invito.

If you had been here, I would have accepted the invitation.

In R1–2, the imperfect indicative may replace the pluperfect subjunctive and/or the past conditional, e.g.:

Se (tu) eri qui, non accettavo l'invito.

If you had been here, I wouldn't have accepted the invitation.

In very colloquial R1 speech, the imperfect indicative may replace the imperfect subjunctive and/or present conditional. Dialect grammar rules transferred to Italian may produce sentences with both clauses in the subjunctive (especially in the South) or both in the conditional (especially in the North and also in Tuscany). All these usages are considered ungrammatical:

Se io non ero così testardo, non mi trovavo in questo pasticcio.

Se io non fossi così testardo, non mi trovassi in questo pasticcio.

Se io non sarei così testardo, non mi troverei in questo pasticcio.

The imperative may occur in the main clause, e.g.:

Se avessi bisogno di me, chiamami a casa.

If you should need me, ring me at home.

31.1.2 Other ways of saying “if”

The conjunction may simply be omitted (in R2–3). If the subject is expressed, it follows the verb, e.g.:

Succedesse a me sarei rovinato (Pratolini).

Were it to happen to me, I would be ruined.

Me l’avesse detto lui, non l’avrei fatto.

Had *he* told me, I wouldn’t have done it.

Fosse entrato in campo Maldini, si sarebbe potuta rinsaldare la difesa.

Had Maldini come on, the defence could have been consolidated.

With the same subject in the two clauses, an infinitive or gerund may be used in certain cases. A present infinitive may be used with **pur di, a patto di, a condizione di**, and with **a**, e.g.:

Pur di/A patto di/A condizione di ottenere un lavoro, mi trasferirei in qualsiasi città.

I would move to any city, provided I could get a job (just to get a job).

A pensarci bene, non avrei dovuto farlo.

Come to think of it, I shouldn’t have done it.

A gerund may also be used, e.g.:

Lavorando sodo, potresti ripagare il prestito in un anno.

By working hard (= If you worked hard), you could repay the loan in a year.

Avresti imparato di più leggendo i testi nell’originale.

You would have learned more by reading the texts in the original.

Studiando tanto, avresti potuto certamente superare quell’esame.

If you had studied hard, you could certainly have passed that exam.

An adjective, adjectival phrase, or past participle may be used without a verb, e.g.:

Di ruolo, avrebbe guadagnato di più.

She would have earned more (if she had been) in a permanent position.

(Se) presa in tempo, la malattia è curabile.

If caught in time, the disease can be treated.

Other conjunctions may be used, usually in R2–3, e.g.:

qualora (R2–3), **quando** (R3), **ove** (R3), **laddove** (R3);

ammesso che, supposto che, nell'ipotesi che, nell'eventualità che (all R3) express greater improbability;

ammettiamo che, mettiamo (il caso) che, supponiamo che (all R2–3);

purché, a patto che, a condizione che (all R2–3) express “provided that.”

NOTE the use of **quando** with the subjunctive to express “if and when,” e.g.:

In base all'apertura dei Medici, Michelangelo avrebbe potuto tornare quando avesse voluto (R3).

On the basis of the open attitude of the Medici, Michelangelo could have returned if and when he wanted.

Relative clauses can also act as hypothetical conditionals. The verb in the relative clause is in the subjunctive (cf. section 30.5.4), e.g.:

Uno che avesse obiettivi chiari, non perderebbe tempo così.

If someone had clear objectives, they wouldn't waste time like that.

(= Anyone who had clear objectives wouldn't waste time like that.)

31.2 Factual conditionals

In these sentences, the two clauses do not express a hypothetical situation, but refer to some aspect of reality and establish a connexion between two states or events. The indicative is usually used in both clauses.

With both clauses in the imperfect the sentence describes a habitual event in the past, e.g.:

Se non avevamo i soldi per pagare, lavoravamo in cucina la domenica.

If/When we didn't have the money to pay, we would work in the kitchen on Sundays.

With both clauses in the present or perfect, the sentence expresses two ideas that are logically linked in some way. This rhetorical use of the conditional construction is more common in Italian (especially R3) than in English, and may be best rendered in English by some other type of clause, e.g.:

Se la situazione internazionale è preoccupante, quella nazionale non è certo tranquilla.

If the international situation is worrying, the domestic situation is certainly not calm

OR The international situation is worrying, but the domestic situation is certainly not calm.

Se (è vero che) Caravaggio rimase sempre debitore alla sua formazione lombarda, tuttavia ebbe il maggior influsso sulla pittura del Meridione (R.3).

While (it is true that) Caravaggio always remained in debt to his Lombard training, he had the greatest influence on painting in the South.

NOTE these colloquial usages, which have parallels in English:

Se hai sete, c'è una birra nel frigo.

If you're thirsty, there's a beer in the fridge.

Se lui canta bene, io sono Pavarotti.

If he is a good singer, I'm Pavarotti.

32 Subordinate clauses

Subordinate clauses can be thought of in two categories. “Explicit” clauses have the verb in a finite, conjugated form (this is normally what is meant by the term “subordinate clause”). “Implicit” clauses have the verb in a non-finite form: infinitive, gerund, or participle. Compare the following sentences. The first contains an explicit subordinate clause, the second an implicit clause:

Mi sono addormentato mentre guardavo la televisione.

I fell asleep while I was watching television.

Mi sono addormentato guardando la televisione.

I fell asleep watching television.

As these examples show, the same meaning can often be expressed by either an implicit clause or an explicit clause. The difference is usually one of register: implicit clauses are more common in higher registers and particularly in writing.

32.1 Explicit subordinate clauses

Explicit subordinate clauses usually come after the main clause, although in most instances the choice is free and a question of style or emphasis. The following types of subordinate clauses tend to come before the main clause:

- (i) Temporal clauses

Quando lo vedrò, gli racconterò tutto.

When I see him, I will tell him everything.

- (ii) Concessive clauses (expressing “although”: cf. section 30.1.4), e.g.:

Benché la scadenza sia già passata, accetteremo la Sua domanda.

Although the deadline has already passed, we will accept your application.

- (iii) If-clauses (cf. chapter 31), e.g.:

Se ci sei, batti un colpo!

If you're there, knock!

- (iv) Limitative clauses, e.g.:

Per quanto ne so, non c'è un numero chiuso in questa Facoltà.

As far as I know, there is no quota in this Faculty.

- (v) Note that clauses beginning with **perché** meaning “because” may only follow the main clause (cf. the similar restriction on English “for”). A “because” clause which comes before the main clause must begin with some other conjunction, such as **siccome**, **poiché**, **giacché**, e.g.:

Ho dovuto prendere un taxi perché non c'erano più tram a quell'ora.

I had to take a taxi because/for there were no more trams at that hour.

Siccome non c'erano più tram a quell'ora, ho dovuto prendere un taxi.

Because there were no more trams at that hour, I had to take a taxi.

32.1.1 Relative clauses

When the relative pronoun is the subject or direct object of its clause, **che** is used. The relative pronoun is compulsory, unlike in English.

Compare:

Il computer che ho comprato ha un difetto.

The computer (that) I bought has a fault.

In R2–3 a form of **il quale** may be used in place of **che**, usually when it is the subject of its clause. **Il quale** is used in a “descriptive” relative clause, i.e. one that does not identify its antecedent but adds information to something already known. It is also used to clarify potential ambiguity, e.g.:

Ho discusso il problema con la signora Brambilla, la quale (or che) ne è rimasta entusiasta.

I discussed the problem with Mrs Brambilla, who was enthusiastic about it.

Ho discusso il problema con la signora che abita al piano di sopra.

I discussed the problem with the lady who lives upstairs.

L'amica di Matteo, la quale lavora in centro, ha avuto un incidente.

Matteo's girlfriend, who works in the city, has had an accident.

When the relative pronoun is the indirect object of its clause, the preposition is used with **cui** or **il quale** (R2–3, also used to avoid ambiguity), e.g.:

Ti voglio far vedere la casa davanti a cui/davanti alla quale eravamo parcheggiati.

I want to show you the house we were parked in front of.

In higher registers, **cui** may be used to mean **a cui**, but not with compound prepositions (e.g. **davanti a cui** cannot be replaced by **davanti cui**), e.g.:

L'autore cui è stato assegnato il premio darà una conferenza stampa (R3).

The author to whom the prize has been awarded will give a press conference.

Relative expressions of time and place may use a relative pronoun, or an adverb, or **che** (this is becoming common for time but still frowned on for place), e.g.:

Non dimenticherò mai il giorno in cui/quando/che (R1–2) ti ho conosciuto.

I will never forget the day I met you.

Non dimenticherò mai il luogo in cui/dove (R1–2)/che (R1) ti ho conosciuto.

I will never forget the place I met you.

In higher registers, the noun may be repeated together with the relative pronoun, and the relative clause may be written as a separate sentence, e.g.:

Tommaso scrisse almeno quattro volte al direttore. Il quale direttore gli aveva promesso di aiutarlo in qualche modo.

Tommaso wrote to the director at least four times. Who had promised him help in some form.

In speech, a pronoun is sometimes used to refer back to the antecedent. This may occur with a relative pronoun plus preposition (and may cause some uncertainty even among educated speakers), or with **che**, which is considered ungrammatical, e.g.:

E' un tipo a cui gli piacciono le donne (R1–2).

E' un tipo che gli piacciono le donne (R1).

He's a type that women like.

Il che or **cosa che** are used to refer to an entire clause, e.g.:

Hanno telefonato più volte per salutarti, il che vuol dire che ti vogliono bene.

They have phoned several times to say hello, which means they are fond of you.

Sono partiti di notte, cosa che non avevano mai fatto prima.

They left at night, something they had never done before.

“Whose” may be expressed in a variety of ways, e.g.:

Si tratta di una malattia i cui sintomi sono difficilissimi da individuare.

Si tratta di una malattia i sintomi della quale sono difficilissimi da individuare (R2–3).

Si tratta di una malattia della quale i sintomi sono difficilissimi da individuare (R3).

This is a disease whose symptoms are very difficult to identify.

“What” may be expressed by **quello che**, **quel che**, **ciò che** (R2–3), or **quanto** (R2–3), e.g.:

Non ha voluto ripetere quello che/ciò che/quanto aveva detto ai giornalisti.

He declined to repeat what he had said to the journalists.

“Whoever” or “those who” may be expressed by **chi**, **quelli che**, **coloro che** (R2–3), **coloro i quali** (R3), **quanti** (R2–3). **Chi** is very common in proverbs, e.g.:

Chi tardi arriva male alloggia.

First come first served (lit S/he who is late finds bad lodgings).

Il libro è scritto per chi desidera conoscere meglio se stesso/per quelli che desiderano conoscere meglio se stessi.

The book is written for those who wish to know themselves better.

Relative expressions with an infinitive require special care. When the antecedent is the direct object of the infinitive, **da** is used (cf. section 27.4.1), e.g.:

E' un libro da leggere/leggersi (R3) attentamente.

It is a book to be read, i.e. a book which one must read carefully.

If the antecedent is an indirect object, a relative pronoun (including preposition) is used before the verb, e.g.:

Cerco qualcuno con cui giocare a tennis.

I'm looking for someone to play tennis with.

E' una proposta su cui riflettere.

It's a proposal to think about.

32.2 Implicit subordinate clauses

Implicit subordinate clauses almost always require the non-finite verb to have the same subject as the main verb. Most exceptions to this are restricted to R3 and are explained below.

32.2.1 Infinitive

In Italian the infinitive is used more widely than in English to replace object clauses beginning with **che**, e.g.:

Credo di aver portato tutti i documenti richiesti.

I believe (that) I have brought all the required documents.

However, it is more restricted in only being used when the subjects of both clauses are the same (see chapter 27). Compare:

Voglio che tu stia tranquillo.

I want you to be happy.

The following construction, with different subjects, is now restricted to extremely formal styles:

Affermava infatti esser la famiglia, e in particolare la sua, la maledizione dell'uomo (R3, Morante).

He claimed indeed that the family, and his in particular, was the curse of mankind.

The infinitive is used with **in** and **con** plus the definite article (always masculine singular) to form implicit subordinate clauses: **in** expresses a contemporaneous action (equivalent to the gerund), e.g.:

Nel vederlo, gli ha gettato le braccia al collo. (= Vedendolo, . . .)

On seeing him, she flung her arms around his neck.

con is only usually found with verbs of beginning and ending, e.g.:

Cominciò/Finì col ringraziare tutti per essere venuti.

He started/ended up by thanking everyone for coming.

The infinitive is also used with other prepositions, but in modern Italian this only occurs in a number of set phrases, most of which are expressions of time, e.g.:

al sorgere del sole

at the rising of the sun

con il passar del tempo

with the passing of time

sul far del giorno/sul far della sera

at daybreak/at nightfall.

32.2.2 Gerund

The use of the present gerund (e.g. **facendo**, **arrivando**) is growing in contemporary Italian, while the past gerund (**avendo fatto**, **essendo arrivato**) is becoming restricted to higher registers.

Meanings of the gerund

The implicit gerund clause can express a number of meanings:

(i) temporal

If the time of the gerund verb precedes or includes the main verb, the gerund usually comes before the main verb, e.g.:

Arrivando a Milano, mi recai a Piazza del Duomo.

On arriving in Milan, I went to Piazza del Duomo.

Passeggiando, Elena ha incontrato Tommaso.

While walking, Elena met Tommaso.

If the time of the gerund verb covers the same time period or one subsequent to that of the main verb, the gerund usually comes after the main verb, e.g.:

Emilia lo guardò sorridendo.

Emilia looked at him (while) smiling.

L'auto ha sbandato violentemente, scontrandosi con un camion.

The car skidded violently, crashing into a truck.

(ii) “Since” or “because”

This is the most common usage of the past gerund, e.g.:

Il magistrato, non avendo riscontrato prove concrete, chiuse l'indagine.

The magistrate, having found no concrete evidence (= since he had found . . .), closed the investigation.

(iii) “although”: the gerund is usually preceded by **pur(e)** or **anche** (R1–2), e.g.:

Pur non essendo d'accordo, rispetterò la decisione del comitato.

Although I do not agree (with it), I shall respect the committee's decision.

(iv) “if”

Only the present gerund is used in this sense (cf. section 31.1.2), e.g.:

Usando un tono più rispettoso, avresti potuto ottenere quello che cercavi.

By using a more respectful tone, you could have got what you were looking for.

(v) “how”, e.g.:

Ha superato l’esame studiando giorno e notte per un mese intero.

She passed the exam by studying night and day for a whole month.

Note that many of the English translations above have a preposition before the verb in *-ing*, to specify the meaning, e.g. “on doing,” “while doing,” “by doing,” etc. In modern Italian no preposition may ever be used before a gerund. If a preposition is used to express a precise meaning, the verb must be in the infinitive, e.g.:

Nell’entrare [= Entrando] nella stanza, Chiara ha capito l’umore dei presenti.

On entering the room, Chiara understood the mood of those present. Adverbs, however, may be used before a gerund, especially **pur** and **anche**. See example (iii) above.

The subject of the verb in the gerund

The verb in the gerund usually takes as its subject the subject of the finite verb on which it depends, but in certain cases it may refer to an indirect object or to some other person clearly identifiable in the context, e.g.:

Mi è successo sciando.

It happened to me while (I was) skiing.

Siamo rimasti in piedi davanti al bar. Chiacchierando del più e del meno, si fece notte.

We stood outside the bar. While we chatted about this and that, night fell.

In higher registers, the gerund is sometimes used to refer to a direct object of the finite verb, but this usage should be avoided by the student, e.g.:

Luis studiò dai gesuiti: pur staccandosi dalla fede, il problema religioso lo tormentò per tutta la vita (Messori).

Luis studied with the Jesuits: though he left the faith, the issue of religion tormented him throughout his whole life.

The gerund is used in a number of set expressions, regardless of the subject, e.g.:

e via dicendo, a Dio piacendo, tempo permettendo

and so on, God willing, weather permitting

In higher registers the gerund may be used with a different subject from that of the finite verb. The subject is placed after the gerund, or after the auxiliary with the past gerund, e.g.:

Avendo la testimone ritirato le dichiarazioni rese durante l’istruttoria, la sentenza è confermata.

Since the witness has withdrawn her statements made during the enquiry, the decision is confirmed.

The position of the gerund in the sentence

A gerund may occur in virtually any place in the sentence. Gerunds expressing “why,” “if,” or “although” often come at the beginning; gerunds expressing “how” or “when” often come at the end of the sentence. See above for the usual position of temporal gerunds according to their meaning.

Gerunds are usually separated from the rest of the sentence by a comma (representing a pause in speech), with one exception: when the gerund comes at the end of the sentence and expresses “how” or “when,” no comma is used. If it expresses other meanings, the comma tends to be used. Note the punctuation in the following:

Sorridendo, Matteo si è ritirato dall’esame.

Matteo si è ritirato dall’esame sorridendo.

Matteo left the exam smiling.

Giudicandosi impreparato, Matteo si è ritirato dall’esame.

Matteo si è ritirato dall’esame, giudicandosi impreparato.

Matteo left the exam considering himself unprepared.

32.2.3 Participles

Present participle

The present participle is seldom used with a verbal meaning to join clauses. In modern Italian it is usually found as an adjective or noun, with little or no verbal force, e.g.:

importante, splendente; insegnante, dirigente, amante, stampante

important, shining; teacher, manager, lover, computer printer

In very formal writing, however, the present participle is increasingly being used as a verb, although it must agree, like an adjective, with the noun to which it refers. This usage should be imitated only with great caution, e.g.:

Due associazioni del settore hanno fatto ricorso contro le decisioni del Consiglio dei Ministri approvanti una convenzione tariffale relativa agli ospedali universitari (R3).

Two professional associations have appealed against the decisions by the Cabinet approving (which approved) a fee agreement relating to university hospitals.

The following type of usage is particularly restricted to bureaucratic and formal language:

i componenti la commissione, i richiedenti asilo (R3)

the members of the commission (lit the persons making up the commission); asylum seekers

Past participle

The past participle is also used as an adjective or noun, e.g.:

innamorato; laureato, sopravvissuto, significato

in love; graduate, survivor, meaning

It is often used, without any auxiliary verb, to join clauses. Usually the participle is associated with a noun in the main clause and thus acts as a kind of implicit relative clause. The type of meaning of the participle depends on the auxiliary the verb takes (cf. chapter 22):

- (i) for transitive verbs, the past participle has a passive meaning, e.g.:

Ho ricevuto ieri una lettera speditami evidentemente da una persona analfabeta.

Yesterday I received a letter obviously sent to me by an illiterate person.

- (ii) for intransitive verbs which take **essere**, the past participle has an active meaning, e.g.:

Ci sono i tuoi amici fuori, venuti apposta per salutarti.

Your friends are outside, who have come expressly to say hello.

- (iii) intransitive verbs which take **avere** may not use the past participle in this way. A past gerund or a finite verb must be used instead, e.g.:

Matteo tornò a casa distrutto, avendo lavorato tutta la notte (OR poiché aveva lavorato BUT NOT lavorato).

Matteo returned home exhausted, having worked all night.

In higher registers, the past participle may also be used as a separate, or “absolute,” clause with a different subject from that of the finite clause.

The participle precedes its own subject and agrees with it, e.g.:

(Una volta) esaminata la situazione, il comitato prenderà una decisione.

Once the situation has been examined (lit The situation having been examined), the committee will make a decision.

Partiti gli ospiti, ci siamo messi a riordinare.

Once the guests had left (lit The guests having left), we started cleaning up.

32.2.4 Nominalization

The use of a noun instead of a verb is typical of higher registers in most languages. R2–3 Italian makes greater use of nominalization than English.

Elena capì che era necessario prendere l’iniziativa.

Elena realized that it was necessary to take the initiative.

Elena capì la necessità di prendere l’iniziativa (R2–3).

Elena realized the need to take the initiative.

32.2.5 Ways of translating words in “-ing”

Great care must be taken in translating English words ending in “-ing,” since they may have a variety of meanings, whereas the Italian gerund is very specific in its use. Words in “-ing” may be:

- (i) a noun, corresponding in Italian to a noun or an infinitive used as a masculine singular noun (with or without article), e.g.:

La lettura (OR il leggere) stimola la fantasia del bambino.

Reading stimulates the child’s imagination.

Attraversare la strada nelle ore di punta può essere pericoloso.

Crossing the road during peak hours can be dangerous.

- (ii) an adjective, corresponding in Italian to a relative clause or present participle, e.g.:

La ragazza che attraversava la strada era la sorella di Giuseppe.

The girl crossing the road was Giuseppe's sister.

- (iii) an adverb, corresponding in Italian to a gerund, e.g.:

E' caduto attraversando la strada.

He fell while crossing the road.

- (iv) a verb, corresponding in Italian to an infinitive, after verbs of perception, e.g.:

Ho sentito Emilia cantare.

I heard Emilia singing.

TEXTS AND THEIR STRUCTURE

33 Interjections

Interjections are a feature of the more spontaneous registers of the spoken language, the same registers where the influence of dialects is strongest. Dialectal or regional interjections (and insults) are therefore not uncommon in Italian. In Italian as in English, the use and choice of interjections ultimately reflect personal taste and sensibility, with “fashion” playing a big role in this very productive field of the living language. Interjections can be “fashionable” one day and disappear the next. The following is a list of some of the more common and “established” Italian interjections: in order to avoid potential embarrassment, the students should restrict their use to the R2 expressions (at least to begin with).

English pragmatic equivalents have been indicated in some cases as a guide.

Some interjections appear more than once, under different labels. The words are the same, the tone changes.

R1* vulgar or indecent

R1 informal,
colloquial

R2 neutral, unmarked

R3 formal, written
Italian words and
expressions are R2
unless otherwise
indicated. See also
p. 5.

In some words, an
accent is used to
indicate the main stress
but should not be used
when writing. See
p. 29.

<i>Admiration</i>	R1*	R1	R2
<i>General</i>	cazzo!	cacchio! càpperi! cavolo!	
		càspita!	
	madonna!	accidenti!	
	òstia! (North)	òstrega! (North-East)	fantastico! perbacco! però!
		ammàppete! (Rome) ammazza(lo)! (Rome) orca!	
frégati!			
<i>Beauty</i>	fico! (Center, South) figo! (North) (NOTE: unambiguously vulgar in the feminine)		bello! bellissimo! stupendo! che bello! (with agreement) che meraviglia!
<i>Excellence</i> <i>(persons)</i>			bravo! bravissimo! (with agreement)

<i>Agreement</i>	R1*	R1	R2
= yes	cazzo!	come no!	assolutamente! certo! perché no?
		senz'altro!	
= exactly		ecco!	giusto! esatto!
		appunto!	
= OK		OK [o'kei] vabbè	va bene d'accordo! benissimo! perfetto!

Annoyance	R1*	R1	R2
General	che (rottura di) palle! (esp boredom) (che) cazzo! minchia! (Sicily)	(che) cavolo! far out! cribbio! crikey!	(ma) insomma! come on!
	merda! shit! fuck!	mannaggia ((al)la miseria)!	
	li mortacci! (Rome) (porca) puttana! porca troia! bloody hell!	per la miseria! miseriaccia! blow! blast!	
	cristo!	(e) che diàmine! (ma che) diavolo! what the heck!	
		accidenti! blast! blimey!	
		santa pace! santa pazienza! heavens above! for heavens' sake!	
		uffa! (also boredom)	
	porcaccia . . .! porca l'oca! porca miseria! porco cane/mondo/giuda! damn!		
	NOTE: the English vulgar use of "bloody" or "fucking" to focus one's annoyance at sth or sb roughly corresponds to the use of the Italian expression del cazzo (R1*) used after the relevant term, e.g.: questo tempo del cazzo! (R1*) = <i>this fucking weather!</i>		
	Directed at persons		e dàì! e su!/e via! come on!
personal insults (with verbal/adjectival agreement) (see also chapter 3, "STUPID")			
stronzo! (lit turd) arsehole!		asino! (lit donkey) you dunce!	maleducato! (lit impolite) how rude!
testa di cazzo! (lit dickhead) shithead!		ignorante! you ignorant . . .!	
vaffanculo! (pl andate affanculo!) va' a dar via il culo! (North) fuck off!		va' al diavolo! va' a quel paese! go to hell!	

<i>Commiseration</i>	R1*	R1	R2
			ahimé! alas!
		poveraccio! (with agreement) poor thing!	poveretto! poverino!

<i>Disappointment</i>	R1*	R1	R2
	<i>same as annoyance, different tone</i>	(che) cavolo! mannaggia!	(che) peccato! ma guarda!

<i>Disbelief</i>	R1*	R1	R2
		ma dai!/ma va'! come on!	davvero? incredibile! non è possibile! non mi dire! (ma) no!
		(e) già! (ironic) sure!	

<i>Disgust</i>	R1*	R1	R2
		che schifo! che schifezza!	
		che porcheria!	

<i>Encouragement</i>	R1*	R1	R2
		dai! (gen) vai! (to one person)	avanti! coraggio! forza!

<i>Joy</i>	R1*	R1	R2
			che bello! evviva! fantastico! sì!

<i>Disagreement</i>	R1*	R1	R2
<i>No! never!</i>	col cazzo! manco per cazzo!	manco per idea!/sogno! manco per niente! (Rome) ma va'!	nemmeno per idea!/sogno!
	col cavolo!		
			macché!
<i>Not at all!</i>			per carità! per (l')amor del cielo! per niente! niente affatto!
<i>Enough!</i>			basta!
<i>So what?</i>		embè?	e allora?

<i>regret</i>	R1*	R1	R2
			ahimé! alas!
			(che) peccato! (what) a pity!

<i>surprise</i>	R1*	R1	R2
	<i>same as annoyance except che palle!, different tone</i>	càspita! cavolo! oddìo!	mamma mia! perbacco! santo cielo!

<i>Warning</i>	R1*	R1	R2
		occhio!	attenzione!
		attento! (with agreement)	

Common 'non-word' interjections (R1–2 unless differently indicated)

pain (= ouch!)	ahi! [ai] (also repeated, [ai . . . ai·ai]) ohi! [ɔi] (also repeated) ahia! ['ajja] ahio! ['ajjo]
Doubt, ignorance (= who knows?)	boh? [bo] (R1) mah? [(m)ma] (R1)
Attracting attention	ehi! [ei] (R1) aho! [a'o] (R1*-1 Rome) uè! [wɛ] (R1 North)

34 Fillers

Pauses and gaps are characteristics of spoken language, born of the necessity for the speaker to coordinate thoughts, find the right word, keep the conversation alive etc. The expressions listed here are frequently used to fill such gaps in spoken Italian, allowing the speaker to “keep the floor” while thinking of what to say next. It should be noticed that both choice and frequency in the use of these “fillers” depend more on personal taste than on their literal meaning, which in these circumstances is often irrelevant.

Italian expression		English equivalent	
		<i>Semantic</i>	<i>Pragmatic</i>
allora	R 1–2	then	so . . . ; well . . .
be’/bèh	R 1–2	well	well . . .
che dico	R 1–2	what am I saying	I mean . . .
cioè	R 1–2	that is	I mean . . .
cioè a dire	R 1–2	that is to say	I mean . . .
come dire	R 1–2	how to say	how shall I put it . . .
coso/cosa	R 1	thing (m/f)	thingamebob, whatchacallit, whatsisname
diciamo	R 1–2	let’s say	let’s say . . .
diciamo così	R 1–2	let’s say so	let’s say . . .

R1* vulgar or indecent

R1 informal,
colloquial

R2 neutral, unmarked

R3 formal, written

Italian words and
expressions are R2
unless otherwise
indicated. See also
p. 5.

Italian expression		English equivalent	
		<i>Semantic</i>	<i>Pragmatic</i>
dunque	R1–2	therefore	well . . . ; now . . .
è che	R1–2	it's that	the thing is, . . .
(e) così	R1–2	(and) so	(and) so . . .
(è) vero	R1–2	(is it) true	you know? . . .
ecco . . .	R1	there it is	(mid-sentence) you know? . . . ; (opener) well . . . ; ALSO = that's exactly it! (interjection)
eee . . . / mmm . . .	R1	–	er . . .
facciamo così	R1–2	let's do like this	let's do (like) this
facciamo una cosa	R1	let's do one thing	let's do this
guarda (guardate)	R1–2	look	look (here) . . .
il fatto è che	R1–2	the fact is that	the fact is that; to tell the truth
insomma	R1–2	to sum it up	so . . .
ma . . .	R1	but	er . . .
niente . . .	R1	nothing	well . . . ; oh . . .
no?	R1	isn't it?	you know? . . .
non è che	R1–2	it's not that	it's not that
non so/saprei	R1–2	I don't/would't know	I don't know . . . ; how shall I put it . . .
per così dire	R2	so to speak	so to speak; as it were
possiamo dire	R1–2	we can say	let's say . . .
potremmo dire	R1–2	we could say	let's say . . .
senti (sentite)	R1–2	listen	listen (here) . . .
se vogliamo	R1–2	if we want	let's say . . .
vabbè	R1	OK	well . . .
vedi (vedete)	R1–2	see	you see . . .
vediamo (un po')	R1–2	let's see (a bit)	let's see . . .
voglio dire	R1–2	I want to say, I mean	I mean . . .

35 Connector words and expressions

The “connector words and expressions” sampled in this chapter are used in both the spoken and the written language and have a cohesive function, allowing the logical flow of sentences. They are therefore different from the so called “fillers,” whose use can be defined as “pragmatic,” to do with maintaining successful verbal interaction, and is characteristically restricted to speech.

<i>Adding</i>	allo stesso modo inoltre, per di più	similarly also, besides
	fra l'altro	among other things, furthermore
<i>Adding correlation</i>	non solo . . . ma anche . . .	not only . . . but also . . .
<i>Admitting</i>	anche se, sebbene	even though
	nonostante, malgrado	in spite of
<i>Confirming or reinforcing</i>	appunto, per l'appunto	precisely
	e infatti, in effetti	indeed
	ovviamente, certo che	of course
	anzi	even more
<i>Contrasting</i>	in effetti, in realtà	in fact
	mentre	while
	ma, però, ma però (R1)	but, however
	tuttavia (R2–3)	however

R1* vulgar or indecent
R1 informal,
colloquial
R2 neutral, unmarked
R3 formal, written
Italian words and
expressions are R2
unless otherwise
indicated. See also
p. 5.

	comunque, in ogni modo, in ogni caso	anyway, at any rate
	ciononostante	nevertheless
	d'altra parte, d'altro lato	on the other hand
<i>Contrasting correlation</i>	da una parte . . . dall'altra . . . ; da un lato . . . dall'altro . . .	on the one hand . . . on the other . . .
	ora . . . ora . . .	now . . . now/then . . . sometimes . . . sometimes . . .
<i>Correcting</i>	al contrario	on the contrary
	anzi	in fact, to be precise
	invece	instead
	che dico (R2), mi correggo (R2–3)	what am I saying, I mean (both in spoken language)
<i>Explaining</i>	il che vuol dire che . . .	which means that . . .
	cioè	that is
	voglio dire (R1–2)	I mean (spoken language)
<i>Expressing purpose</i>	in modo/maniera tale che, così che, così poi (R1)	so that
<i>Introducing cause</i>	poiché, dal momento che, dato che, giacché (R2–3)	since (usu before stating the effect)
	perché	because (after stating the effect)
<i>Introducing effect</i>	e così, e allora (R1–2)	and so
	per cui	(and) for this reason
	di conseguenza	consequently, as a consequence
	dunque, perciò, quindi (R1–2), pertanto (R2–3)	therefore
<i>Listing</i>	prima di tutto . . . poi . . . infine . . .	first (of all) . . . then . . . finally . . .
	in primo luogo . . . in secondo luogo . . . in terzo luogo . . .	firstly . . . secondly . . . thirdly . . . (etc.)
	primo . . . secondo . . . terzo . . . (R1–2)	first . . . second . . . third . . .
<i>Stating alternatives</i>	(o) . . . o/oppure . . .	(either) . . . or . . .
	. . . altrimenti/sennò (R1) . . .	. . . otherwise/or else . . .
<i>Summing up</i>	insomma, a/per farla breve	to sum it all up, in short
	tutto sommato	all things considered
	in fondo, dopotutto	after all

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Italian word index

This Index includes all Italian words cited or discussed in the book. It covers all chapters except those which list proper, technical or foreign terms, i.e. **7** Proper Names, **8** Geographical Names, **9** Abbreviations and Acronyms, **10** Latin Expressions, **12** Numerals and Telephone Conventions, and **13** Measurement.

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| a 321–325, 425 | accidente 30 | addormentare 313 | agevolazione 45 |
| abbaiare 123 | accidenti! 434, 435 | addormentarsi 160, 313 | aggettivo 222 |
| abbandonare 119 | accingersi 375 | addossare 109 | aggiudicare 30, 73, 109 |
| abbandonarsi 375 | –accio 172 | addosso 180 | aggiungere 369 |
| abbassare 71, 300 | acciuflare 116 | adempiere 388 | aggiustare 42, 131 |
| abbastanza 379 | accoglienza 49 | adiacenze 126 | aggiustata 131 |
| abbattere 100, 103, 137, 313 | accogliere 72 | adirarsi 91 | aggrapparsi 116 |
| abbattersi 313 | accollare 109 | adorare 367 | aggravare 301 |
| abbisognare 297 | accomodare 42, 131 | adulatore 36 | agguantare 116 |
| abbondare 304 | accomodarsi 42 | adulterare 101 | agile 151 |
| abbreviare 100 | accomodata 131 | aereo da carico 40 | agitazione 32 |
| abbuiare 298 | accompagnare 149 | affabile 33 | agonia 30 |
| abile 30, 376, 381 | accompagnato 175 | affaccendato 376 | agonizzare 31 |
| abitabile 34 | acconsentire 90, 369 | affamare 159 | ahi! 438 |
| abito 186 | accontentarsi 370, 388 | affanculo (mandare –) 179 | ahia! 438 |
| abituare 376 | accorciare 100, 301 | affascinante 94 | ahimè! 436, 437 |
| abituarsi 375 | accordare 109 | affascinare 35, 365 | ahio! 438 |
| abituato 376 | accordarsi 90 | affatto 286 | aho! 438 |
| aborigeno 122 | accordo 44, 90, 158, 382, 434 | niente – 437 | aia! 176 |
| abortire 303 | accorgersi 312, 370, 388 | affermare 133, 369, 406 | aiutare 114, 186, 376 |
| abusare 42, 388 | accorrere 303 | afferrare 116 | ala 258 |
| acca 287 | accostare 313 | affettare 42, 100 | alcolico 42 |
| accadere 36, 297, 368 | accostarsi 313 | affibbiare 109 | alcolizzato 42, 52 |
| accalappiare 116 | accrescere 301 | affidare 109 | alcuno 286 |
| accampamento 32, 54 | accrescersi 111 | affinché 411 | alieno 381 |
| accendere 160 | accrescimento 52 | affine 32 | alimentare 158 |
| accennare 159, 369, 372, 382 | accrescitivo 223 | affiorare 296 | all'improvviso 137 |
| accento 221, 224 | accusare 42, 372 | affisso 129 | alla fine 34 |
| accettare 90, 369 | acqua 175, 182, 184, 185, 186 | affliggere 91 | allampanato 151 |
| accettazione 52 | acquazzone 144 | affogare 299 | allargarsi 111 |
| accezione 52 | acuto 224 | affondare 299 | allegro 38, 40, 46 |
| acchiappare 116 | adattarsi 375 | affrettarsi 117, 374 | allenarsi 375 |
| –acchiare 173 | adatto 376 | affrontare 33, 71 | allenatore 40 |
| –acchione 173 | adetto 376 | afrore 141 | allettante 94 |
| –acchiotto 171 | addirsi 90 | agenda 30 | allo stesso modo 441 |
| acciaio 184 | additare 139 | agente 128 | alocco 146–147 |
| | | – delle tasse 31 | alloggiare 31, 42, 187 |
| | | agevolare 114 | allontanare 313 |

Italian word index

- allontanarsi 119, 313
 allora 439
 e -? 437, 442
 alloro 175
 allunare 68, 160
 allungarsi 111
 altario 175
 alterare 42, 101
 altero 130
 altezzoso 130
 alto 153, 281
 altrettanto 272
 altrimenti 442
 altro 276
 d'- lato 442
 d'altra parte 442
 altura 115
 alzare 313
 - il gomito 178
 alzarsi 111, 313
 amare 367
 ambiente 52
 àmbito 52, 86
 ambito 86
 ameno 94
 America 182
 ammalare 301
 ammalarsi 160
 ammalante 94
 ammàpette 434
 ammarare 68, 160
 ammazzalo 434
 ammesso che 419
 ammettere 90, 133, 369,
 405
 ammettiamo che 419
 amministrare 42
 ammolare 73
 ammonire 118, 382
 ammuffire 296
 amore 437
 ampliarsi 111
 ampolla 96
 amputare 100
 analizzare 105
 anatra 123
 anche 279, 425, 441
 - se 410, 441
 andarci matto 166
 andare 291-292, 296, 309,
 369, 374
 - (a qu) 162
 - a male 161
 - via 119
 andarsene 119, 166
 angioletto 10
 angolare 131
 angolo 40
 - d'incidenza 35
 angoscia 30
 anguria 11
 anello 11
 anima 75
 - viva 180
 animato 52
 animo 75
 animoso 52
 annata 52
 annegare 69, 299
 annichilare 103
 annichilire 103
 annientare 103
 anno 52, 85, 125
 - sabbatico 117
 annoiare 42, 313
 annoiarsi 313
 annoso 125
 annottare 298
 annunciare 118, 133,
 369
 annuncio 31, 129
 ano 85
 ansa 114
 ansioso 373
 antico 125
 anticucina 40
 anzi 35, 441, 442
 anziano 125
 apertura 116
 apice 153
 apogeo 153
 apostrofo 224
 apparecchiare 160
 apparenza 52, 92
 apparire 297
 apparizione 52, 92
 appartenere 303, 365
 appassire 296
 appellativo 121
 appendiabiti 10
 appendino 10
 appioppare 109
 appisolarsi 160
 applicazione 42
 appoggiare 114, 299
 apprendere 382
 apprestarsi 375
 approdare 296
 approfittare 160, 312
 approfittarsi 312
 approfondire 160, 387
 appropriarsi 142, 388
 approvare 74, 387
 appuntamento 42
 appunto 434, 441
 prendere appunti 149
 aprile 181
 aprire 160
 arabo 180
 arca 79
 archi 145
 archibugio 112
 archivio 260
 arco 79
 ardire 371
 ardore 106
 area circostante 126
 -arellare 173
 argomentazione 52
 argomento 31
 arguire 31
 aria 92, 175
 tromba d'- 144
 arido 105
 arma 79, 258
 - da fuoco 112, 124
 armo 79
 aroma 141
 arrabbiare 313
 arrabbiarsi 91, 313
 arraffare 142
 arrampicarsi 98
 arrapato 88
 arrendersi 312
 arricchire 301
 arrivare 296, 374
 arrogante 130
 arrossare 53
 arrossire 53, 296
 arrostito 299
 arrosto 177
 arrugginire 301
 arso 105
 artefice 67
 articolare 133
 articolato 222
 articolo 222
 artificio 67
 artiglieria 112
 arto 119
 ascendere 98
 asciugare 301
 asciutto 105, 151
 ascoltare 387
 asilo 49, 150
 asino 123, 185, 435
 aspettare 371, 382, 387,
 409
 aspettarsi 370
 aspetto 92, 106
 asportare 149
 asporto 149
 assaggiare 154
 assaporare 53
 assassinio 42
 assatanato 88
 asse 43
 assegnare 109
 assennato 38
 asserire 133, 369, 406
 assessore 31
 assi 126
 assistente 150
 assistere 31, 114, 388
 asso 175
 assoggettare 102
 assolutamente 434
 assomigliare 388
 assorbire 35
 assordare 299
 asta 143
 astenersi 381
 asterisco 224
 astratto 222
 -astro 172
 astuto 42
 atono 221
 attaccapanni 10, 12
 attaccare 374
 attardarsi 375
 attempato 125
 attendente di volo 36, 40
 attendere 31
 attento 376, 437
 attenuante 34
 attenuare 34
 attenzione 437
 atterraggio 53
 atterramento 53
 atterrare 68, 299
 atterrare 68
 attico 31
 attività 140, 156
 attivo 223
 attizzatoio 41
 atto 41, 376
 attore comico 32
 attraente 94
 attrattiva 53
 attraverso 294, 326
 attrazione 53
 attrezzature 45
 attribuire 109
 attuale 31
 augurarsi 371
 aumentare 111, 299
 autoctono 122
 automobile 32

- autorizzare 376
 avanti 331–332, 436
 – negli anni 125
 avanzamento 53
 avanzare 162, 299
 avanzata 53
 avanzato (di età avanzata) 125
 avanzo 53
 – di galera 53
 avariare 101
 avarizia 42
 avaro 36
 avena 260
 avercela con qu 165
 averci 9, 166
 avere 377, 383
 – a che fare 161
 – con sé 149
 averla con qu 165
 avidità 42
 avito 85
 avvalersi 312
 avvampare 296
 avveduto 42
 avvenente 94
 avvenimento 36
 avvenire 296, 297
 avverbio 222
 avvertimento 31
 avvertire 118, 372
 avviare 313
 avviarsi 313
 avvicinare 313
 avvicinarsi 313
 avvisare 118
 avvisato 187
 avviso 129
 avvito 85
 avvocato 126, 175
 azienda 34
 –azzo 172
 azzuppare 11

 babbeo 146–147, 148
 babbo 11, 12
 babbuccia 136
 baccalà 146–147
 bacchetta 143
 baccelli 11
 Bacco 85
 baco 85
 bacucco 125
 bada (tenere a –) 183
 badarci 166
 badare 31, 383
 baffo 113

 bagagli 259
 bagagliaio 51
 baggiano 146–147
 bagnato 180, 184
 baiocchi 120
 balena 79
 balenare 298
 baleno 79
 balia 86
 bālīa 86
 balla 79
 ballo 79
 in – 178
 balordo 146–147, 148
 balzare 296
 bambino/–a 96
 banale 38
 banca 75
 banchetto 45
 banchina 140
 banco 75, 134
 banda 80
 bandiera 143
 bando 80, 129
 bar 39
 baracca 31, 175
 barba 113
 barbaro 281
 barbone 11
 barca 47, 95, 182
 barra 39, 143, 225
 barriera 108, 155
 barrire 123
 barrito 123
 basamento 40
 base 40
 basette 113
 basket 39
 basta 437
 bastare 162, 277, 297, 365, 383, 407
 bastimento 95
 bastoncino 143
 bastone 143, 175
 battaglia (cavallo di –) 176
 nome di – 121
 battello 95
 battere 71, 102, 180, 186
 – a macchina 71
 battersela 165
 battersi 71
 battesimo (nome di –) 121
 battuta 39
 bau/bau-bau 123
 baule 51
 bavero 43
 bazar 138

 be’/bèh 439
 bebè 96
 becco 175
 – di un quattrino 120
 bèe 123
 belare 123
 belato 123
 bellino 11
 bellissimo 94, 434
 bello 46, 94, 165, 184, 279, 377
 –/che –! 434, 436
 ben nutrito 106
 benché 410
 bene (far –) 90
 – in carne 106
 benedire 175
 benissimo 434
 benzina 36, 107
 beota 146–147, 148
 bere 124, 184, 185
 darla a – 165
 berla 165
 bersela 165
 bestia 91, 175
 andare in – 91
 bevuta 124
 bianco 184
 di punto in – 88, 182
 in – 175
 in – e nero 175
 biberon 96
 biblioteca 35
 bibliotecario 35
 bicchiere 110
 bietolone 146–147
 bigiare 11
 bilia 93
 bigliettotaio 33
 bilancia 76, 260
 bilancio 76
 biglia 93
 biliardino 40
 bimbo/–a 96
 binocolo 110
 bisbiglio 86
 bisbiglio 86
 bischero 146–147
 bisdrucchio 221
 bisognare 297, 365, 407
 bisogno (avere –) 159, 371
 bisticcio 37
 bisturi 38
 bisunto 104
 blaterare 133
 boa 252
 bocca 175, 186, 289

 boccaccia (fare una –) 106
 boccale 110
 boccata 53, 120
 boccetta 96
 boccia 93
 boccino 93
 boccone 53, 120
 body 39
 boh? 438
 bollare 53
 bolletta 182
 bollire 53
 bomba 43, 80, 124
 tornare a – 175
 bombo 80
 bordare 31
 bordo 43, 140
 a – 43
 borgata 126
 borioso 130
 borraccia 96
 borseggiare 142
 botta 76, 124
 botte (f pl) 84, 175, 259
 botte (f s) 84, 176, 183
 bōtte/bòtte 84
 bottega 138
 bottegaio/–a 138
 bottiglia 96
 bottiglione 96
 botto 76, 124
 bouquet 141
 box 40
 bozza 76
 bozzo 76
 braccio 175, 253
 brace 180
 bramare 367
 bramire 123
 bramito 123
 branca 80
 branco 80
 bravissimo 434
 bravo 31, 46, 377, 381, 434
 breccia 116, 132
 breve (per farla –) 442
 brevetto 36
 briciola 76
 briciolo 76
 bronzo 177
 bruciapelo (a –) 88, 175
 bruciare 299
 – le tappe
 brutto 165, 184, 279
 buca 76, 116
 buco 76, 116

Italian word index

- budello 253
 bue 176, 183, 185, 258
 bufera 144
 bulbo oculare 93
 bum 124
 buon giorno 58
 buono 46, 184, 281, 376
 burattini 175
 burbanzoso 130
 burocrate 135
 burrasca 144
 bussare 124
 bussola 43, 181
 busta 67, 80
 bustarella 67
 bustina 67
 busto 180
 buttare 152
 – giù 103
 buttarsi 374
- cabina per la doccia 40
 cacchio 434
 caccia 252
 andare a – 137
 cacciare 71, 137
 cacio 11, 185
 cadde 85
 cade 85
 cadente 33
 cadere 33, 71, 124, 296
 lasciare/fare – 158
 caduta 124
 caffè 39
 cagna 123
 cai/cai-cai 123
 calamità 86, 89
 calamita 86
 calare 68, 299, 301
 calcagno 114, 253
 calcestruzzo 33
 calciare 159
 calcio 103, 114, 159
 – d'angolo 40
 scarpa da – 136
 calcolatore 76
 calcolatrice 76
 calcolo 132
 caldo 53
 calende 176
 calice 110
 calorico 53
 calorifero 53
 calorifico 53
 caloroso 53
 caloscia 136
 calpestare 387
- calzatura 136
 calze 126
 calzoni 126
 cambiamento 53
 cambiare 42, 71, 300
 cambio 53
 camera 31
 camerata 252
 cameriere/-a 135
 camicia 176, 179
 camino 85
 camminare 294, 295
 cammino 85, 127
 campana 124, 184
 campanello 124
 campare 297
 campeggio 32, 40, 54
 camping 40, 54
 campo 32, 54
 – di concentramento 56
 canarini 126
 cancellata 108
 cancellotto 224
 cancelliere 43
 cancello 108
 candelotto 143
 cane 123, 176, 180, 184, 185
 freddo – 177
 porco – 435
 canestro 39, 137
 canna 67, 143
 cannella 67
 cannone 67, 68, 112
 cannuccia 67
 canoa 95
 canone 68
 canonica 76
 canonico 68, 76
 canotto 95
 cantante 54
 cantare 123, 185
 cantautore 54
 canticchiare 170
 canto 54, 123
 cantore 54
 canzone 54
 capace 30, 373
 capelli 113, 176, 259
 capello 113, 176, 177
 capigliatura 113
 capire 406
 fare – 35
 capitale 120, 252
 capitare 162, 297, 368
 capitolo 183
 capitombolo 124
- capo 166–167, 176
 a – 225
 andare a – 225
 capo d'istituto 150
 capopagina 153
 capote 153
 capoverso 225
 cappa 252
 capperi 434
 cappotta 153
 cappuccio 153
 capra 123, 176
 capriola 80
 capriolo 80
 captare 54
 carabina 112
 carabinieri 128
 caramella 76
 caramello 76
 carattere 43
 carbone 184
 carburante 107
 cargo 40
 cariarsi 44
 carica 76, 156
 carico 40, 76
 carino 11, 94
 carità 108
 per – 437
 carnagione 32
 carne 106, 176
 caro 85, 281
 carovana 145
 carponi 294
 carrello 54
 carretta 43, 54
 carriola 54
 carro 32, 54, 85, 176
 carrozza 54
 carrozzella 54
 carrozzina 54
 carrozzone 54
 carta 43, 176
 cartella 80
 cartello 43, 80, 129
 cartellone 129
 caruccio 11
 casa 67, 80, 85, 184
 faccende di – 156
 casaccio (a –) 176
 cascare 296
 casello 108
 caserma 31
 casino 32, 67, 86, 182
 casinò 32, 86
 caso 80, 107
 fare – 159
- in ogni – 442
 per il – che 413
 caso mai 413
 caspita! 434, 437
 cassa 40, 85
 casseruola 32
 cassetta 40, 76
 cassetto 77
 castigo 37
 casuale 32
 casualmente 32
 catapulta 43
 catastrofe 89
 catena 145
 catinella 181
 catorcio 43
 cattedratico 150
 catteriveria 55
 cattività 55
 cattivo 33, 279
 catturare 54, 116
 causa 161
 cautela 32
 cauzione 32
 cava 32, 55
 cavalcare 294
 cavallo 123, 186
 – di battaglia 176
 cavarsela 165
 caverna 32, 55
 cavillare 37
 cavità 116
 cavo 145
 cavolo 176
 – /che –! 434, 435, 436, 437
 col –! 437
 un – 180, 287
 cazzo/che – ! 434, 435
 col –/manco per –! 437
 del – 435
 stare sul – 91, 183
 testa di – 435
 un – 287
 cazzone 146–147
 cedere 109
 ceffone 11
 celere 128
 celerino 128
 –cello 170
 cemento 33, 55
 cencio 11
 cenno (fare un –) 159
 centro 134
 cera 77, 106, 176
 cercare 154, 186, 371, 387
 cerchia 77

- cerchio 55, 77, 176
 cero 77
 certo 281, 373, 405–409, 434
 – che 441
 cervello 253
 cervo 123
 cessare 298, 371
 cesto 39
 cetriolo 32
 che 9, 422–424
 – dico 439, 442
 cherosene 107
 chi 423
 chiacchierare 133
 chiamare 376
 chiappe 95
 chiarire 301
 chiaro 184
 chiave (chiudere a –) 159
 chicchirichì 123
 chicco d'uva 260
 chiedere 92, 372, 387, 388
 china 115
 chinare 58
 chinarsi 59
 chioccia 123
 chiocciare 123
 chiocciola 224
 chioma 113
 chiudere 72, 159, 160, 175
 chiuso 141
 ci 9, 166–167, 264, 266
 ciabatta 136
 cianciare 133
 ciarlare 133
 cicalare 133
 ciccone 106
 ciclone 144
 cieco 184, 187
 cielo 176, 186
 per amor del –! 437
 santo –! 437
 cifra 46
 ciglia 113
 ciglio 113, 254
 cima 153
 cemento 55
 cinepresa 31
 cinghia 55
 cinguettare 123
 cinguettio 123
 –cino 169
 cinta 55
 cintola 55
 cintura 55, 126
 – di castità 55
 – di sicurezza 50–88
 cinturino 55
 cinturone 55
 ciò che 423
 cioè 439, 442
 – a dire 439
 ciononostante 442
 ciottolo 132
 cip/cip–cip 123
 circo 55
 circolare 295, 296
 circolo 55
 circostante (area –) 126
 citrullo 146–147
 cittadino 50
 classe 46
 clava 143
 clavicola 43
 clessidra 110
 cloche 143
 coadiuvare 114
 coagulare 44
 coccio 185, 186
 coccodè 123
 cocktail 40
 cocomero 11, 32
 cocuzzolo 153
 coda 145, 176
 coerente 33
 cogliere 72, 116
 coglione 93, 146–147
 coglioni (rompere i –) 182
 stare sui – 183
 cognato 32
 cognome 121
 colare 68, 72, 304
 – a picco 181, 300
 colerico 85
 colf 135
 colla 80
 collaborare 114
 collaboratrice familiare 135
 collana 43
 collare 43
 collaudare 154
 colle 115
 college 32
 collegio 32, 43
 collerico 85
 collettivo 222
 colletto 43
 collettore 43
 collezionista 43
 collina 115
 collo 43, 80
 colmo 153
 colonna 145
 colorato 55
 colore 176
 colorito 55
 coloro che 423
 colpa 80, 99
 dare la – 158
 farsi una – 161
 colpevole 55, 373
 colpo 38, 80, 176
 colposo 55
 còlto/còlto 84
 coma 85
 comandare 372
 comando (barra di –) 143
 comare 11, 12
 combustibile 107
 come 272, 409
 come dire 439
 come no 434
 come per 413
 come se 176, 401, 413
 comico 32
 cominciare 186, 298, 307, 374, 383
 comma 85
 commediante 32
 commendatore 68
 commentare 387
 commentatore 68
 commiserazione 38
 commissione 156
 commovente 377
 commozione 32, 33
 commuovere 47, 73
 comodità 32
 comodo 44, 176
 compagno 134
 comparativo 221
 comparire 297
 comparizione 92
 comparsa 92
 compasso 43
 compensare 387
 compenso 127
 competente 378
 competenze 127
 competizione 43, 98
 compiacente 32
 compiacenza 32
 compiacersi 383
 compiacimento 32
 compiaciuto 30
 compiere 56
 compimento 55
 compiti 259
 compito 56, 86
 còmpito 86, 156
 compiuto 56
 complemento 55
 complemento oggetto 223
 complessione 32
 complimento 55
 comporre 74
 composto 223
 comprendere 406
 comprendonio (duro di –) 146–147
 comprensibile 56
 comprensione 38
 comprensivo 38, 43, 56
 compromesso 43
 comune 187, 222
 comunicare 118
 comunque 442
 con 326–327, 424
 – tutto che 410
 concedere 109, 373
 concentramento 56
 concentrarsi 375
 concentrazione 56
 conciare 177
 conciliare 49, 68, 72
 concilio 68
 concordare 44, 90
 concorde 381
 concorrenza 43, 98
 fare – 158
 concorrere 44, 303
 – alle spese 30
 concorso 98
 concreto 33, 222
 concussione 33
 condannare 376
 condizionale 223, 224
 condizione 145
 a – che/di 412, 418, 419
 condizioni 259
 essere in – di 176
 conducente 56
 condurre 149, 376
 conduttore 33, 56
 confabulare 133
 confarsi 90
 conferenza 35–42, 44, 133
 conferire 109
 confessare 133, 369
 confidenza 44
 confortevole 44
 confrontare 33, 71

Italian word index

- confrontarsi 33
 confronto (mettere a –) 33
 confusione 32
 congedo 117
 congelare 44, 73
 congelarsi 44
 congiuntivo 223, 224
 congiunto 32
 congiunzione 222
 congratularsi 312, 388
 congresso 44
 conoscente 56
 conoscenze 259
 conoscere 118, 395
 conoscitore 56
 conquibus 120
 conquistare 102
 consapevole 368
 consegnare 109
 conseguenza (di –) 442
 conseguire 75
 consentire 44, 369, 383
 conservante 36
 conservare 48, 72
 considerare 37
 considerevole 50
 consigliare 68, 372
 consiglio 68
 – di amministrazione 43
 consistente 33, 50, 382
 consistere 297, 381
 consonante 223
 contadino 36
 contanti 120, 259
 contarci 166
 contare 72, 370
 contento 33, 184, 373, 404
 contenuto 33
 continuare 298, 374
 conto 176
 tenere – 161
 fare i conti 176
 contrario (al –) 442
 contrattare 158
 contrattempo 89
 contravvenire 388
 contravvenzione 99
 contribuire 375
 contro 327–328
 controcorrente 177
 controllare 44, 105
 convegno 44
 convenire 90, 163, 304, 365, 384, 407
 convenzione 44
 conversare 133
 convincere 376
 convivere 299
 convinto 405
 cooperare 114
 coperchio 153
 copia 85
 coppia 85, 110, 126
 coprire di insulti 121
 coraggio! 436
 coraggioso 31, 378
 corda 145, 186
 cordiale 34, 40
 cordicella 145
 cordoncino 145
 cordone 145
 cornacchia 123
 cornata 158
 corner 40, 177
 corna (con le –) 88
 avere/mettere le – 177
 fare le – 177
 corno 88, 254
 cornuto 88, 185
 corpo 39
 corpulento 106
 correggere 131
 correggio (mi –) 442
 correre 72, 117, 302, 374
 corresponsione 127
 corrispondere 90
 corrompere 101
 corsa 77
 corsivo 222, 225
 corso 41, 77, 127
 còrso/còrso 84
 corteo 145
 cortese 33
 corvo 123
 cosa 439
 facciamo una – 440
 – che 423
 coscia 77, 119
 – di pollo 143
 coscienza 44
 coscio 77, 119
 così 272, 379
 – che 442
 – da 411
 – poi 442
 diciamo – 440
 e – 440, 442
 facciamo – 440
 per – dire 440
 coso 17, 439
 costa 80, 115
 costante 33
 costare 297, 365
 – un patrimonio 120
 costipato 44
 costipazione 44
 costo 80
 costretto 377
 costringere 376
 cotto 176
 cova 77
 covo 77
 cra cra 123
 crac 124
 crasso 33
 creativo 56
 creatore 56
 creatura 44, 96
 crederci 166
 credere 370, 405
 credersela 165
 crema 44
 crepa 116
 crepaccio 116
 crepare 296
 crescenza 52
 crescere 111, 300
 crescita 52
 cresta 153
 cretino 146–147, 148
 cribbio! 435
 crimine 99
 crine 113
 criniera 113
 cristallo 110
 cristianità 44
 cristo! 435
 critica 77, 155
 critico 77
 croce 10
 a occhio e – 180
 crocetta 10
 crociera 10
 crollare 296
 fare – 103
 crosta (terrestre) 153
 cruccia 10
 crudele 45
 crudo 176
 cucco 184
 cucinare 56
 cucuzzolo 153
 cuffia 182
 cui 422
 per – 442
 culmine 153
 culo 95, 107
 avere – 107, 177
 che –! 177
 mandare affanculo 179
 prendere per il – 178
 va' a dar via il –! 435
 cuocere 56, 301
 cuoia 254
 tirare le – 177
 cuoio 254
 cuore 132, 186
 cupido 86
 cùpido 86
 cupo 36
 curatore 34
 curioso 373
 cuscinetto a sfera 93
 d'accordo 44, 90, 158, 382, 434
 da 309, 327, 328–331
 – parte di 309
 dai/ (e) –! 435, 436
 dal momento che 442
 danaro 120
 danneggiare 101
 dappertutto 140
 dare 42, 109
 – da mangiare 158
 – nell'occhio 180
 – retta 159
 darla a bere/intendere 165
 dati 259
 dato (n) 259
 dato (V) (essere –) 369
 – che 442
 davanti 331–332
 davvero? 436
 decade 33
 decadere 44, 71, 296
 decennio 33
 decente 44
 decidere 30, 369, 384
 decidersi 375, 384
 deciso 377
 declamare 133
 declino (in –) 30
 declivio 115
 decollare 119
 decomporsi 44
 decorrere 297, 303
 decrepito 125
 decrescere 296
 deferire 45, 49, 73
 deficiente 56, 146–147, 148
 defluire 296
 deformare 101
 deforme 56
 degenerare 296

- degnarsi 160
 degno 373
 degustare 73
 del luogo 122
 delitto 99
 delizioso 94
 deludere 33
 delusione 33
 deluso 404
 demolire 103
 demonio 184
 denaro 36, 120
 – sporco 104
 denotare 139
 dente 152
 denunciare 45, 161
 denunziare 45
 denutrito 151
 deperito 151
 deperire 296
 depredare 142
 deprimere 313
 deprimersi 313
 deragliare 296
 deretano 95
 derivare 300
 derubare 74, 142
 desiderare 367, 407
 desistere 381
 destare 313
 destarsi 313
 destinato 377
 destino 107
 destituito 33
 destituzione 33
 desumere 405
 deteriorare 101
 determinare 384
 determinativo 222
 deturpare 101
 devastare 103
 di 37, 332–334
 – fatti 31
 – fronte 331–332
 dialetto 119
 dialogare 133
 diamine 435
 diaria 127
 diatesi 223
 diavolo 177, 179, 185
 che –! 435
 l'avvocato del – 175
 va' al –! 435
 dicci 85
 diceria 38
 dichiarare 35, 133, 369,
 406
 dici 85
 diciamo (così) 439
 didietro 93, 95
 dietro (n) 93
 dietro (prep) 290–291,
 335
 difensore 93
 difettivo 45, 56
 difettoso 45, 56
 differire 45, 73
 difficile 377
 difficoltà 382
 diffidare 381
 difforme 56
 diffusamente 87
 dilapidare 33
 dilapidato 33
 dilatarsi 111
 diluvio 144
 dimagrire 300
 dimenticare 314, 370
 dimenticarsi 314, 370
 diminuire 300
 diminutivo 223
 dimissioni 259
 dimostrare 34, 139
 dimostrativo 222
 din don 124
 dinamite 143
 dinanzi 331
 dindi 120
 dinnanzi 331
 dintorni 126
 dio 258
 Dio 181, 186
 dipendente 222
 dipendere 297, 388
 dire 133, 186, 369, 372,
 406
 mandare a – 376
 direttore 33, 34, 150
 dirla grossa 158
 disapprovare 387
 disastro 89
 discendere 298
 discesa 115
 in – 88
 disco 41, 47, 100
 discordia (pomo della –)
 181
 discorrere 72, 133, 303
 discorso 133
 discussione 31
 discutere 31, 133
 disfare 103
 disgrazia 33, 91
 essere in – 33
 disgustare 73
 disidratato 105
 disintegrare 103
 disoccupazione 156
 disonore 33
 disperato 373
 dispiacere 163, 297, 366,
 404, 407
 dispiaciuto 373
 disponibile 377
 disporre 384, 388
 disposto 377
 disseccare 100
 disseccato 105
 dissuadere 381
 distare 160
 distendersi 41
 distensione 41
 distinto 282
 distruggere 103
 disturbare 91
 disturbo 91
 dito 177, 254
 ditta 34
 dittongo 223
 divampare 296
 divenire 296
 diventare 111, 296
 diverso 282
 divertirsi 375
 divisa 120
 divisorio 155
 doccia (– scozzese) 177
 cabina per la – 40
 docente 150
 documento 37, 41
 doglie 47
 dolce 282
 dolore 186, 297
 dolore 30
 domanda 33, 42, 49, 92
 domandare 33, 92, 368,
 372, 387
 domani 186
 domestico (adj) 45, 156
 domestico (n) 45, 135
 donare 109, 186
 donazione 108
 donna (– delle pulizie) 135
 – di servizio 135
 dono 108
 dopo 335
 dopotutto
 doppietta 112
 dormire 177, 185, 186
 dorso 93
 dosso 115
 dotare 109
 dote 108
 dōtto/dōtto 84
 dottore 34
 dovere (n) 157
 dovere (V) 267, 306–307,
 367, 397, 417
 dovunque 140
 drin/drindrin 124
 dring/dring–dring 124
 dubbio 405
 dubitare 370, 388
 due punti 224
 duna 115
 dunque 440, 442
 durare 304
 duro 184
 – di comprendonio
 146–147
 e/è 83
 e commerciale 224
 ebete 146–147, 148
 eccellere 297
 eccessivo 38
 eccetto che 412
 ecci 124
 eccitato 88
 ecco 434, 440
 echeggiare 298
 editore 34
 – del montaggio 34
 educatore 150
 educatrice 150
 educazione 34
 eee . . . 440
 effettivamente 34
 effettivo 34, 56
 effetto 153
 in effetti 35, 441
 efficace 34, 56, 377
 efficacemente 34
 efficiente 56
 effluvio 141
 eh! 438
 elaborare 37
 elargire 109
 elargizione 108
 elefante 123
 elementare 150
 elemosina 108
 –ellare 173
 –ello 170
 elsa 114
 emaciato 151
 emanare 304
 embè? 437

- emergere 296
emigrare 302
emotivo 57
emozionante 57
emozione 45
emporio 138
energetico 57
energico 57
enfasi 45
enfatico 45
entrarci 167
entrare 296
entrata 108
entro 352
entusiasmare 366
epico 45
epigrafe 129
epitaffio 129
epopea 45
equilibrio 40
equivalere 297
-erellare 173
-erello 170
erta 115
erudito 50
esalazione 141
esaminare 105
esatto 434
esauriente 43
esaurientemente 88
eschimese 40
eschimo 40
esclamare 369
escludere 406
esempio 35
esemplare 36
esercente 138
esercitarsi 388
esercizio commerciale 138
esibire 139
esibizione 37, 45
esigente 34
esigere 33, 92
esile 151
esistere 297
esitante 377
esitare 375, 381
esito 34
eskimo 40
esondare 296
esortare 376
esoso 38
espandersi 111
espatriare 296
espletivo 45
esplodere 124, 300
esplosione 124
- esporre 133, 139
esposizione 45
espressione 106
espresso 52
esprimere 39, 74
esprimersi 133
essere 297, 375, 381
– dietro a 10, 291
è che 440
non è che 286–288, 440
estendersi 111
estenuante 34
estenuare 34
esteso (per –) 87, 88
estorcere 142
età 125
-ettare 173
-etto 170
evadere 304
evaporare 304
evento 36
eventuale 34
eventualità (nell' – che)
419
eventualmente 34
evidenza 34
evincere 34
evitare 371, 407
evolvere 296
evolversi 111
evviva! 436
- fabbrica 34
faccenda 156
faccino 48
faccia 106, 140, 177
rompere/spaccare la –
179
facciamo così 440
facciamo una cosa 440
facciata 140
facile 34, 184, 377
facilità 45
facilitare 114
facilitazione 45
falciaie 100
falla 77
fallare 57
fallire 45, 57, 303
fallo 77, 99
falò 106
fame 159, 184
famigerato 36, 57
familiare 45
famoso 57
fanciullo/-a 96
fango 68
- fantasia 382
fantastico 434, 436
fantolino/-a 96
farcia 165, 182, 375
fare 123, 186, 384
– a meno 161
– in modo 161
far – 368
sul – del giorno/della
sera 425
farla finita 165
farla franca 165
farla grossa 165
farla lunga 165
farneticare 133
farsi le pere 137
fastidio 42, 91, 158, 366,
407
fastidioso 34
fatica 47, 156
faticare 11, 375
fatto 107
fattezze 105
fatto (n) (il – che) 409
il – è che 440
fatto (V) (venire –) 369
fatuo 130
fava 181
favella 119
favoriti 113
fedele 11
fegato 177
felice 373
felicità 57
felicitazione 57
femminile 222
fendere 69, 100
fenditura 116
ferace 68
ferale 45
feriale 117
ferie 117
ferire 35, 137
ferita 35
fermare 313
fermarsì 313, 374
fermo 45
feroce 51, 68
ferro 177, 186
– di cavallo 136
toccare – 177
fertilizzare 158
fesso 146–147, 148
fessura 116
festa 45, 57, 117, 177
Buone Feste 259
festino 45
- festività 57, 117
festivo 46, 57, 117
festoso 46, 57
fetore 141
Fiamme gialle 128
fiancata 140
fianco 140
fiasca / fiaschetta 96
fiasco 43, 96
fiato 100
fica 80
fico 80, 94, 434
un – secco 166, 180,
287
fidarsela 165
fidarsi 388
fiero 130, 373
figlio/-a 96
figo 94, 434
figura 46
fila 80, 144, 177
filarsela 165, 177
filmare 137
filo 80, 145, 254
– da torcere 177
filone (fare –) 11
filosofale (pietra –) 132
filtrare 300
filza 145
finale (adj) 34
finale (n) 252
Finanza 128
finanziere 128
finché 412
fine (adj) 46
fine (n) 40, 252
al – di 411
alla – 34, 88
finestra 156
finestrino 156
fingere 37, 406
finire 298, 371, 384
finirla 165
finito 165, 223
fino 294, 336
finta (fare –) 37, 370, 406
fioccare 298
fionda 43
fiore (il fior –) 177
fiorire 296
firma 34
fischiettare 169
fisica 80
fisico 34, 80
fisionomia 106
flacone 96
flemma 46

- flipper 40
 florido 106
 focaia (pietra -) 132
 foglia 77, 185
 foglio 77
 folla 69
 folle 69
 fondamento 57, 254
 fondare 69, 73
 fondazione 57
 fondello 178
 fondere 69, 301
 fondi 120
 fondo 93, 134
 in - 442
 fondoschiena 95
 fonologia 221
 fontana 185
 fonte 252
 footing 40
 forbici 126
 forza 67
 forchetta 67
 forcina 67
 forcone 67
 forma 46
 formaggio 11
 formalità 32
 formazione 30, 46
 formica 86
 fòrmica 86
 formicolio 260
 formoso 94
 fornire 109
 foro 116
 fóro/fòro 84
 foro di ventilazione 38
 forte 184, 377
 fortuna 107, 120
 avere - 177
 fortunale 144
 fortunato 373
 forza 436
 forze 259
 - dell'ordine 259
 fossa 57, 77, 116
 fossato 57
 fosso 77
 fotografare 137
 fotografia 137
 fotografico (macchina -)
 31
 fotersene 166
 fra 345-346
 - l'altro 441
 fracassare 97
 fracassarsi 97
 fracasso 34
 fragranza 141
 franare 296
 franco (farla franca) 165
 frantumare 97
 frantumarsi 97
 frantumi (mandare in -) 97
 frase 46, 50, 255
 freddezza 57
 freddo 57, 177, 184
 freddura 57
 fregare 142
 fregarsene 166
 frégati! 434
 frequenza 35
 fretta 117
 frettoloso 187
 friggere 179
 frizione 46
 frodare 142
 fronte 252
 di - a 331-332
 frugoletto/-a 96
 frutta 77
 frutto 77
 fucilare 137
 fucile 112
 fuggire 304
 full 40
 fumando 41
 fumante 41
 fumare 41, 185
 fumo 177
 fune 145
 funerale 259
 funerali 259
 fungo 46, 68
 funzionario 135
 funzione 156
 fuoco 106, 137, 176, 177,
 179
 fuori 336-337
 - dai gangheri 178
 - di sé 178
 buttare - 152
 fuori bordo 43, 95
 fuorigioco 140
 fuoriuscire 296
 furbo 178
 furie 91
 fuso 254
 futile 38
 futuro 223
 futuro anteriore 223
 gaffe 178
 galleggiare 295
 gallina 123, 178, 186
 gallo 123, 187
 galoscia 136
 gamba 77, 119
 gambo 77
 gamma 252
 ganascia 179
 ganghero 178
 gara 98
 garage 40
 garretto 145
 garrire 123
 garrito 123
 garzone 96
 gasolio 36, 107
 gatta 178, 187
 gattino 187
 gatto 123, 178, 185, 186
 gaudio 187
 gelare 73, 298, 301
 gelata 57, 78
 gelato 78
 gelo 57
 gemelli 126
 gemma 132
 gendarme 128
 genere 222
 generi alimentari 138
 genesi 252
 geniale 34
 genitore 36
 gentile 34, 382
 gente 260
 gergo 119
 gerundio 223
 gesto 254
 gettare 152
 - la spugna 183
 ghermire 116
 ghiaccio 155, 184
 ghiaia 132
 ghiro 185
 ghisa 128
 già 436
 giacca 153
 giacché 422, 442
 giaccone 40
 giacere 297
 gilè 39
 ginnastica 136
 ginocchio 145, 254
 giocare 388
 giocatore 153
 giocherellare 169
 gioco 178
 in - 178
 giornaliero 127
 giornata 58, 127
 giorno 58, 117, 187
 giovane 96
 giovanotto 96
 giovare 90, 297, 388
 gioviale 34
 girare 137, 185, 300
 giro 178
 gironzolare 295
 giù 342
 giuda (porco -) 435
 giudicare 30, 58, 73, 154
 giudiziale 58
 giudiziario 58
 giungere 296, 374
 giurare 369
 giuridico 58
 giustificare 38
 giustiziare 58
 giusto 434
 gli 9, 263-264
 globo 93
 glu glu /glu-glu 124
 glutei 95
 gnocco 12
 goal 40
 goccia 78, 178
 goccio 78
 gocciolare 304
 godere 371
 godimento 382
 gol 40, 137
 golf 40
 gomito 178
 gomito 93
 gonfalone 129
 gonfiare 301, 313
 gonfiarsi 111, 313
 gonzo 146-147
 gorgheggio 86
 gorghéggio 86
 governante 58, 135
 governatore 58
 gracchiare 123
 gracchio 123
 gradicare 123
 gradicio 123
 gracile 151
 gradevole 94
 gradinata 134
 gradire 367
 grado 222
 graffo 224
 grafico 221
 grammatica 187
 grana 78, 120
 granata 252

Italian word index

- grande 35, 184, 282
 grandinare 298
 grandinata 144
 grano 78
 grassetto 225
 grasso 184
 grassoccio 106
 grassottello 106
 gratifica 127
 grato 373
 grattare 142
 grave 224
 grazia 176
 grazioso 34, 94
 gregge 69
 greggio 69, 107
 grido 254
 groppa 80, 93
 groppo 80
 grosso 34, 35, 106, 184
 dirla/farla grossa 165
 grossolano 34
 grotta 32
 gruccia 10
 grugnire 123
 grugnito 123
 grugno 30, 34
 grullo 146–147
 gruzzolo 120
 guaire 123
 guaito 123
 guanti 126
 guardare 387
 guarda/guardate! 440
 – /ma –! 436
 guardaroba 40
 guardarsi 160, 381
 guardia 58, 128
 Guardia di Finanza 128
 guardiano 58
 guarire 300
 guastare 101, 313
 guastarsi 313
 guerriglia 34
 guerrigliero 34
 guidare 149, 294
 gustare 73
 gusto 187

 hi ho/i-o 123
 hinterland 126
 ho/o 83
 hockey 143
 hostess 36, 40

 i 182
 -icchiare 173
 -iccio 171
 -icciolo 170
 -icciuolo 170
 -icello 170
 -iciattolo 171
 -icino 169
 idea 437
 idioma 46, 119
 idiomatismo 46
 idoneo 377
 idiota 146–147, 148
 idoneo 378
 iella 11, 107
 ieri sera 64
 -igno 171
 ignorante 46, 435
 ignorare 46, 370, 406
 il che 423
 – vuol dire che . . . 442
 illudere 33
 illudersi 406
 illusione 33
 imbarcare 313
 imbarcarsi 31, 313
 imbarcazione 95
 imbattersi 71, 312
 imbecille 146–147, 148
 imbestialirsi 91
 imbiancare 300
 imbianchire 300
 imbrattato 104
 imbronciato 36
 imbrunire 301
 immaginare 370, 405
 immaginarsi 405, 406
 immediatamente 37
 immigrare 296
 immondo 104
 impadronirsi 116, 313
 impallidire 296
 imparare 375
 impassibilità 382
 impaurire 301
 impaziente 373
 impazzare 58
 impazzire 58, 297
 impedire 372, 407
 impegnarsi 375
 imperativo 223
 imperfetto 223
 impiccato 186
 impiegato 135
 impiego 156
 implorare 92, 372
 impolverato 104
 imporre 372
 importante 46
 importare 163, 180, 297,
 366, 408
 importarsene 166
 importunare 91
 impossessarsi 116
 impossibile 377
 imprecazione 45
 impresa 34
 imprevisto 89
 improvviso (all'–) 137
 impugnare 116
 impugnatura 114
 imputridire 297
 in 337–340, 424
 – effetti 35, 441
 – realtà 441
 inabitabile 34
 inasprire 301
 incacchiarsi 91
 incallito 88
 incantevole 94
 incapace 373
 incaricare 372
 incaricato 373
 incarico 109, 156
 incavolarsi 91
 incazzarsi 91
 incendiare 387
 incendio 106
 incenerire 103
 inchinare 58
 inchinarsi 59
 inchino 59
 inciampare 295
 fare – 159
 incidente 30, 90
 incidenza 35
 incidere 100
 incitare 376
 inclinare 58
 inclinarsi 59
 incline 377
 incombenza 156
 incominciare 298, 374
 incomodare 91
 inconscio (adj) 46, 59
 inconscio (n) 59
 incontrare 312
 incontrarsi 312
 incontro 98
 incoraggiare 376
 incorrere 303
 incosciente 46, 59
 incredibile 436
 incrinare 97
 incrinarsi 97
 incrudelire 305
 incudine 178
 indagare 105
 indebolire 301
 indecente 104
 indefinito 222, 223
 indennità 127
 indeterminativo 222
 indiano 177
 indicare 139
 indicativo 223
 indicazione 129
 indietreggiare 296
 indietro (marcia –) 179
 indigeno 122
 indigente 33
 indigenza 33
 indignarsi 91
 indipendente 222
 indorare la pillola 181
 indurre 376
 inebriare 35
 infangato 104
 infante 96
 infatti 35, 441
 infelice 404
 infelicità 35
 inferiore 150, 364
 inferire 69
 infiammare 313
 infiammarsi 313
 infierire 69
 infine 442
 infinito 223
 infischinarsene 166
 influenzare 388
 influire 42, 388
 informale 32, 59
 informare 118
 informatica 59
 informazione 59, 259
 informazioni 259
 informe 59
 infortunio 89
 infradito 136
 infrangere 97
 infrangersi 97
 infrazione 99
 infuriarsi 91
 ingegnosità 35
 ingelosire 301
 ingenuità 35
 ingiuria 35, 121
 ingiuriare 35
 inglese 177
 ingrandire 300
 ingrandirsi 111
 ingrassare 111, 300

- ingrassarsi 111
 ingrossare 35, 111, 300
 ingrossarsi 35, 111
 inguine 34
 iniziare 298
 inizio 153
 innamorati 126
 innanzi 331
 innervosire 91
 -ino 169
 inoltre 441
 inosservanza 99
 inquinamento 36
 inquinato 104
 insanguinato 104
 insaporire 53
 insegnare 129
 insegnante 150
 insegnare 376
 insensato 146–147, 148
 inserviente 135
 inserzione 31, 129
 insistere 375, 384
 insolazione 69
 insomma 435, 440, 442
 insorgere 296
 insospettire 300
 ispirare 73
 insulso 146–147, 148
 insultare 42, 121
 insulto 121
 intagliare 100
 intelligente 146–147
 intemperie 259
 intendere 46, 385
 darla a – 165
 intendersela 165
 intendersi 118
 intentare 161
 intento 377
 intercorrere 303
 interessamento 59
 interessare 305, 366, 385
 interessato 377
 interesse 59, 259
 interno 45
 interrogare 92
 interrogatorio 35, 59
 interrogazione 35, 59
 intervenire 46, 296
 intimare 35
 intimidire 300
 intoppo 89
 intossicare 35
 intransitivo 223
 introdurre 46
 intuire 405
- invalido 47
 invecchiare 300
 invecchiato 125
 invece 442
 investigare 105
 investire 47
 invidioso 35
 invitare 376
 invogliare 313
 invogliarsi 313
 inzuppare 11
 ipermarket 138
 ipermercato 138
 ipotesi 419
 irascibile 36
 irascibilità 36
 irritabile 36
 irritabilità 36
 irritare 91, 313
 irritarsi 313
 irritato 373
 iscrizione 129
 isolamento 69
 ispezione 105
 ispirare 73
 istanza 35
 istituto universitario 32
 istitutore 150
 istruttrice 150
 istruire 47
 istruito 47
 istruttore 150
 istruttrice 150
 istruzione 34
- jeans 40
 jolly 40
 joystick 143
- labbro 254
 laburista 47
 laccio 11, 145
 laddove 419
 ladro 128
 lagnarsi 313, 369
 lamentela 59
 lamentarsi 369
 lamento 59
 lampeggiare 298
 lancia 47, 81, 95
 spezzare una – 178
 lanciare 152
 lancio 47, 81
 – del disco 47
 lapide 129, 132
 largo 35
 al – 87
- alla larga 87
 lasciare 119, 371, 378, 385
 – in asso 175
 lascivo 88
 lastrico 182
 lato 106, 140
 da un – 140
 d'altro – 442
 da un – . . . dall'altro . . .
 442
 di – 140
 latrare 123
 latrato 123
 lattante 96
 lavanderia 40
 lavarsene le mani 179
 lavorare 11
 lavoro 47, 156
 legaccio 145
 legare 73
 leggiadro 94
 legna 78
 legno 78, 95
 Lei 268–269, 403
 lente (d'ingrandimento)
 110
 lenzuolo 255
 leone 123
 leopardo 123
 lercio 104
 lesione 35
 letizia 382
 lettera 225
 letto 178
 lettore 150
 lettrice 150
 lettura 35
 letture 259
 levare 149
 lezione 35
 lezzo 141
 libero 38, 373
 libertà 87
 libraio 35
 libreria 35
 libro 185
 licenza 47, 117
 lieto 373
 lievitare 300
 lima 81
 limitarsi 160, 375
 limitrofo (zona limitrofa)
 126
 limo 81
 linea 178
 lineamenti 105
 lineetta 224
- lingotto 39
 lingua 59, 119, 181
 – materna 122
 linguaggio 59, 119
 liquido 120
 lira 120, 178
 liscio 184
 lite 31, 34
 litigante 187
 litigio 37
 livello 153
 locale 122
 locandina 129
 locazione 35
 locuzione 46
 lontano 187, 381
 look 92
 lordo 104
 loro 267, 316
 Loro 268–269, 403
 loto 85
 lotta 81
 lotto 81, 85
 lucci 85
 luccicare 297
 luce 178
 luci 85
 lumaca 184
 lume 178
 luminoso 129
 lungi 381
 lungo (prep) 294, 348
 lungo (adj) (a –) 88
 alla lunga 88
 farla lunga 165
 saperla lunga 165
 tirlarla per le lunghe 165
 lunotto 156
 luogo 122
 – convenuto 38
 in primo – 442
 lupara 112
 lupo 123, 185
 lurido 104
 lusso 35, 59
 lussuoso 35, 59
 lussuria 35, 59
 lussurioso 35, 59
- ma . . . 440
 –/– però 441
 – dai! 436
 – guarda! 436
 – insomma! 435
 – no! 436
 – va'! 437
 macché! 437

- macchia 178
 macchiato 104
 macchina 34
 – da presa 31
 – fotografica 31
 macigno 132
 macilento 151
 madonna 434
 della – 182
 madrelingua 122
 madrepatria 122
 madrina 11
 maestro 150, 382
 magari 403
 magazzino 138
 maggiordomo 135
 maggior parte 261
 magico 143
 maglia 39
 maglione 40
 magnifico 94
 mah? 438
 mai 187, 286
 maiale 123, 184, 185
 maiuscolo 225
 male 187
 andare a – 161
 fare – 35, 158, 375, 388
 maleducato 37, 435
 malgrado 441
 mamma mia 437
 mammalucco 146–147
 mancanza 159
 mancarci 167
 mancare 159, 163, 277,
 305, 371, 385
 – una rotella 182
 manco 286, 415
 – per cazzo/idea/
 sogno/niente 437
 mandare 376
 – a quel paese 179, 435
 maneggio 86
 manéggio 86
 manganello 143
 mangiare 179, 180, 185
 dare da – 158
 mangiarsi le mani 179,
 181
 mangiucchiare 170
 manica 81, 175
 maniche 179
 manico 81, 114
 maniera (in – (tale) che)
 411, 442
 manifestare 34, 139
 manifestazione 47
 manifesto 129
 maniglia 114
 mannaggia! 435, 436
 mano 179
 dare una – 114
 manodopera 47, 157
 manovella 114
 mansione 156
 mantello 113
 mantenere 38, 73
 mantenimento 59
 manubrio 114
 manutenzione 59
 marcare 59
 marciare 59
 marcia 47
 – indietro 179
 mettere in – 47
 marciapiede 36
 marciare 69, 294, 295
 marcire 44, 69, 297
 mare 186
 margine 140
 marmocchio 96
 marrone 35
 – rossiccio 35
 martello 178
 maschile 222
 massiccio 115
 massima 178
 massimo 153
 masso 132
 materia 50
 materiale 47
 materno 122
 matta 40
 mattina 59, 187
 mattinata 59
 mattino 59
 matto 181
 maturare 300
 maturo 125
 Matusalemme 184
 mazza 81, 143
 mazzetta 67
 mazzo 67, 81
 media 60
 mass – 60
 mediano 60
 medicamento 47, 60
 medicazione 47, 60
 medicina 47, 60, 149
 medico 34
 medio 60, 150
 medium 60
 meglio 102, 154, 275
 fare del proprio – 154
 mellone 11
 melone 11
 membro 255
 menare 149, 176
 mendicante 11
 meno (– male) 404
 a – che/di 412
 del più e del – 180
 fare a – 161
 mensile 127
 mensilità 127
 menta 81
 mente (venire in –) 36
 mentecatto 146–147
 mento 81
 mentre 441
 meraviglia 434
 meravigliare 313
 meravigliarsi 313, 404
 meraviglioso 94
 mercante 180
 merce 32, 260
 mercede 127
 merda! 435
 meritare 369
 merlo 146–147
 messa 69
 messe 69
 mestiere 156
 meta 40, 87
 metà 87
 meticoloso 34
 metronotte 128
 metterci 167
 mettere 118
 – al corrente 118
 – alla prova 154
 – in marcia 47
 – in mostra 139
 mettersi 374
 – dalla parte di 161
 – in testa 371
 mettiamo (il caso) che
 419
 mezzo (adj) 88
 mezzo (n) 260
 mi 262
 – correggo 442
 miagolare 123
 miagolio 123
 miao 123
 miasma 141
 mica 8, 286
 migliorare 300, 303
 migliore 153, 275
 migrare 296
 miliare 132
 milite 128
 milizia 128
 minacciare 371
 minchia 435
 minchione 146–147
 mingherlino 151
 minuscola 225
 mirabile 94
 mirare 375
 miscela 40
 miscuglio 40
 miseria 35, 435
 miseriaccia! 435
 misero 36
 misfatto 99
 mister 40
 mitra 112
 mitragliatrice 112
 mm . . . 440
 mobile (adj) 47
 mobile (n) 47
 mocassino 136
 moccioso/–a 96
 moda 78
 modo 78, 223
 allo stesso – 441
 fare in – 161
 in – (tale) che 411,
 442
 in – da 411
 in ogni – 442
 modulo 46
 moglie 183, 258
 molestare 91
 mollare 74, 109
 moltiplicarsi 111
 momento (dal – che)
 442
 monaca 11
 monaco 186
 mondo 179, 435
 monello 96
 moneta 36, 120
 montagna 60, 115
 montagnoso 60
 montanaro 60
 montano 60
 montare 98, 298
 montato 130
 monte 60, 115
 montone 123
 montuoso 60
 mora 78, 85
 morale 252
 morbido 36, 60, 260
 morboso 36, 60
 morfologia 221

- morire 159, 186, 297
 – dal ridere 381
 moro 78
 moroso 36
 morra 85
 morsa 78
 morso 78, 120
 mortacci! 435
 mortaio 112
 morte 184
 mosca 179, 184
 moschetto 112
 mostra 45, 81
 mettere in – 139
 mostrare 139
 mostro 81
 mota 81
 moto 81, 253
 motocicletta 81
 motorino d'avviamento 41
 motoscafo 95
 mozzare 100
 mucca 123
 muffa 141
 muggire 123
 muggito 123
 mulattiera 127
 mulinello 144
 munizioni 260
 muovere 47, 73, 301, 313
 muoversi 47, 121, 313
 muraglia 155
 muraglione 155
 muretto 155
 muricciolo 155
 muro 55, 155, 185, 255
 muso 106, 179
 mutande 126
 mutare 300
 mutilare 100
 muto 184
 muu 123

 nafta 36, 107
 narrare 133
 nascere 176, 297
 naso 178, 179
 nastro adesivo 41
 natale 122
 natiche 95
 natio 122
 nativo 122
 nave 95
 – da carico 40
 navetta 183
 navigare 294, 295
 nazionale 45

 ne 264–265, 272
 né 286
 neanche 286
 necessario 377
 negare 69, 74, 369, 406
 negoziante 138
 negozio 138
 nemmeno 286
 – per idea/sogno 437
 neon 129
 neonato/–a 96
 neppure 286
 neretto 225
 nero 175, 183, 184
 nessuno 286
 neve 144, 184
 nevicare 298
 nevicata 144
 niente 9, 180, 286, 289
 – . . . 440
 – affatto 437
 per – 437
 nitrare 123
 nitrito 123
 no 284–285, 286–288
 –? 440
 come –! 434
 ma –! 436
 perché –? 434
 nocciolo 87
 nòcciolo 87
 noce 253
 noia (dare –) 91
 noialtri 262
 nome 121, 222
 nomignolo 121
 nomina 42
 nominativo 121
 non 270–272, 285–288,
 289, 412
 – . . . che 284–285
 – che 405–409
 – è che 286–288,
 405–409, 440
 – è possibile 436
 – mi dire! 436
 – perché 411
 – plus ultra 153
 – so/saprei 440
 – solo . . . ma anche . . .
 441
 nonno 86
 nono 86
 nonostante 441
 nota 37
 note 86
 notificare 118

 notorio 36
 nottata 60
 notte 60, 86, 175, 185
 notturno 128
 novella 67
 nozze 260
 nubifragio 144
 nulla 176, 180, 187,
 286
 nullo 51
 numero 46, 222
 numeroso 282
 nuocere 101, 187
 nuotare 185, 294, 295
 nuovo 282
 – di zecca 180
 nutrito 106
 nuvola 180

 o/ho 83
 obbligare 376
 obeso 106
 oblò 156
 obolo 108
 obsoleto 125
 oca 123, 146–147, 181,
 435
 occhiali 50, 110, 126
 occhiata (dare un'–) 38
 occhio 180, 186, 437
 non chiudere – 180,
 289
 saltare agli occhi 180
 –occio 172
 occorrenza 36
 occorrere 36, 163, 303,
 366, 408
 occupato 377
 occupazione 156
 oddio! 437
 odioso 35
 odore 141
 odorino 141
 offendere 313
 offendersi 313, 370
 offerta 108
 office 40
 officina 66
 offrire 109
 oggetto 223
 oggi 186
 ogni (in – caso) 442
 in – modo 442
 –ognolo 172
 ohi 438
 OK 434
 olezzo 141

 –olino 169
 olio 107, 178, 184
 –olo 170
 oltrepassare 74
 omaggio 108
 ometto 10
 omicidio colposo 55
 onda 60
 ondata 60
 –one 170, 172
 onomastico 57
 onorario 127
 onorato 373
 –onzolo 171
 opera 156
 operare 387
 opportunità 47
 oppure 442
 ora (– di punta) 82
 – . . . – . . . 442
 è – che 408
 non vedere l'– 407
 orario 127
 orca 434
 ordinare 372
 ordinario 150
 ordine 30
 ore 126
 orecchia 180
 orecchio 180, 182
 orfano 48
 orgoglioso 130
 orifizio 116
 originale 61
 originario 61, 122
 oriundo 122
 orologio 124
 orribile 377
 osare 367
 osceno 104
 ospitare 42
 ospite 36
 ossequioso 36
 osso 180, 255
 in carne ed ossa 176
 pelle e ossa 151
 oste/ostessa 36
 ostentare 139
 ostia 434
 ostrega 434
 ostrica 36
 –ottare 173
 –otto 171
 ottuso 146–147, 148
 ove 419
 ovunque 140
 ovviamente 441

- pace 435
 padella 180
 padrino 11
 padrona di casa 40
 padrone 36
 paesano 36
 paese 36, 186
 mandare a quel – 179, 435
 paf/paffete 124
 paffuto 106
 paga 127
 pagare 181, 186, 387
 paio 126
 pala 81, 86
 palanche 120
 palato 153
 palazzo 48
 palcoscenico 41
 palesare 139
 paletto 143
 palla 86, 93
 pallacanestro 39
 palle (che (rottura di) –!) 435
 rompere le – 91, 182
 pallina 93
 pallino 93
 palloncino 93
 pallone 93
 pallottola 93
 palma 78
 palmo 78
 palo 81, 143
 pam/pamfete 124
 panca 134
 panchetto 134
 panchina 134
 panciotto 39
 panciuto 106
 pane 67, 97, 180, 184
 panino 67
 panna 44, 81
 panno 81
 pantalone 260
 pantofola 136
 pantomima 36
 papa 48, 86, 87
 papà 11, 87
 pappa 86
 para 87
 parà 87
 parabrezza 156
 parafulmine 33
 paraggi 126
 paragone 36, 132
 paragrafo 225
 parcella 127
 parente 32, 36, 49
 parentela 49
 parentesi 224
 parere 164, 297, 368
 parete 140, 155
 – rocciosa 36
 pargolo/-a 96
 parlarci 167
 parlare (n) 119
 parlare (V) 133, 180, 185, 371
 parlarsi addosso 180
 parlata 119
 parlottare 169
 parola 32, 119, 289
 essere di – 181
 prendere la – 133, 181
 rimangiarsi la – data 182
 parolaccia 45
 parte 69, 330
 da – 140
 da una –. dall'altra . . . 441, 442
 d'altra – 442
 la maggior – 261
 mettersi dalla – di 161
 schierarsi dalla – di 161
 partecipare 118
 participio 223
 partire 119, 296
 partita 81, 98
 partito 47, 81
 parto 69
 pascià 185
 pasqua 184
 passata 12
 passare 74, 155, 300, 305, 374
 – per la mente/testa 369
 – per le armi 137
 col – del tempo 183, 425
 passarla bella/brutta 165
 passarsela 173
 passato 223
 passeggiare 294, 295
 passione 106
 passivo 223
 passo 181
 pasta 152
 patapum/patapunfete 124
 patatra 124
 patente 36, 47
 patria 122
 patrimonio (spendere un –) 120
 pattino 87
 pàtino 87
 patto (a – che/di) 412, 418, 419
 paura (avere –) 370, 383, 404
 pavimento 36
 pazienza 435
 pazienza (perdere la –) 91
 pazzo da legare 181
 peccato 99, 184
 –/che –! 404, 408, 436, 437
 pecora 123
 peculio 120
 pecunia 120
 pedagogo 150
 peggio 185
 peggiorare 300, 303
 peggiorativo 223
 pelle 181
 – d'oca 181
 – e ossa 151, 255
 pelliccia 113
 pelo 113, 181
 per un – 181
 peluria 113
 pendenza 115
 pendice 115
 pendio 115
 pendola 78
 pendolo 78
 pensarci 167
 pensare 370, 385, 405
 pensiero 108
 pensionato 32
 pensione 43, 48
 pentirsi 313, 370
 per 340–342, 348, 352, 411
 – così dire 440
 – cui 442
 – di più 441
 – quanto 411
 – quel che 411
 pera 137
 perbacco! 434
 percepire 48
 perché 411, 422, 442
 – no? 434
 non – 411
 perciò 442
 percorrere 303
 percorso 127
 perdonare 388
 perfetto 434
 periferia 126
 periodo 50, 222
 – di tirocinio 41
 perire 297
 perito 31
 perizoma 145
 perla 145
 perlustrare 105
 permanere 297
 permesso 117
 permettere 373, 407
 permettersi 371
 pernottare 160
 però 434, 441
 perquisire 105
 perseguire 48, 61, 75
 perseguire 61
 persiana 11
 persistere 297, 374
 persona 224
 di – 181
 personaggio 43
 personale (adj) 222
 personale (n) 135, 150
 persuadere 376
 persuadersi 385
 pertanto 442
 pertica 143
 pertinente 37
 pertinenza 37
 pertugio 116
 perturbazione 144
 pervenire 296
 pesa 78
 pesante 106
 pesare 74, 300
 pèsca/pèsca 84
 pesca (canna da –) 143
 pesce 184, 185, 186
 – d'aprile 181
 bastoncino di – 143
 peso 78
 peste 177
 petrolio 36, 107
 petulante 36
 petulanza 36
 pezza 11, 78
 pezzente 11
 pezzo 48, 78
 – d'artiglieria 112
 – di sopra 153
 – forte 48
 – grosso 48, 181
 fare a pezzi 97
 piacente 94
 piacere 164, 277, 297, 366, 408

- avere – 412
 fare – 408
 piacevole 94
 piagnucolare 169
 pialla 61
 piana 61
 pianella 136
 pianeta 253
 piangere 124, 185, 374, 387
 piano (adj) 61, 187, 221
 piano (n) 52, 61, 153
 pianta 81
 piantare 175
 piantarla 165
 pianto 81, 124
 pianura 61
 platano 61
 picca 82
 picche 38, 82
 picchetto 143
 picchiata 181
 piccino/-a 96
 piccione 181
 picco 82, 115
 colare a – 181, 300
 piccolo/-a 96
 piede 181, 183
 piedipiatti 128
 piegare 102
 piegarsi 59
 pieno 40
 – di sé 130
 pietra 132
 pietrisco 132
 pigiama 260
 pigliare 116, 186
 pignolo 34
 pigolare 123
 pigolio 123
 pillola (indorare la –) 181
 pim/pam 124
 pingue 106
 pinna 40
 pinza 260
 pioggia 144
 piolo 143
 piombo 181
 pio-pio 123
 piovere 181, 298
 pira 106
 pirla 146–147
 pirulino 11
 pispolino 11
 pista 127
 pistola 112
 più 286
 per di – 441
 pizza 113
 pizzardone 128
 pizzicagnolo 16
 pizzicarolo 16
 placca 129
 plurale 222
 poco 289
 – intelligente 146–147, 148
 poema epico 45
 poggio 115
 poi 442
 poiché 422, 442
 poker 41
 polentone 13
 poligono di tiro 137
 polipo 61
 politica 78
 politico 78
 polizia 128
 poliziotto 128
 pollo 143
 polluzione 36
 polpa 82
 polpo 61, 82
 polso 48
 poltrona 134
 polverizzare 103
 polveroso 104
 pomata 44
 pomello 11, 114
 pomo 114
 – della discordia 181
 ponte 117
 pope 48
 popone 11
 poppante 96
 porcaccia! 435
 porcheria/che –! 436
 porco 123
 – cane/giuda/mondo! 435
 porca l'oca/ miseria! 435
 porca puttana/troia! 435
 fare il – 176
 porgere 109
 porre 74
 porta 40, 82, 108
 portafinestra 156
 portamento 92
 portare 74, 142, 376
 – via 149
 porte 126
 portento 48
 portiere 11, 48
 portinaio 11
 porto 82
 posate 260
 posizione 35
 possessivo 222
 possiamo dire 440
 possibile (fare il –) 154
 non è – 436
 posta 82
 le Poste 260
 poster 129
 posteriore 95
 posto 35, 82, 134
 – di lavoro 156
 potare 100
 potenza 61
 potere (n) 61
 potere (V) 267, 306–307, 367, 397
 non – fare a meno 178
 poterne (non – più) 166, 370
 potremmo dire 440
 poveraccio! 436
 poveretto! 436
 poverino! 436
 povero 33, 182, 282
 povertà 33
 pozza 79
 pozzo 79
 pratica 187
 precettore 150
 precipitare 300
 precipitarsi 117, 374
 precipizio 36
 precorrere 303
 predisporre 376
 preferire 367, 407
 pregare 92, 372, 387
 pregiudicare 73
 pregiudicato 61
 premere 74, 297
 prendere 116, 149
 – sul serio 182
 prendersela 165
 preoccuparsi 370
 prepararsi 375
 preparativo 48, 61
 preparato 48, 61, 377
 preparazione 48, 61
 preposizione 69, 222
 presa 31
 presagio 48
 presentare 46, 61, 139
 presentazione 47
 presente (n) 108
 presente (adj) 161, 223
 presenziare 31, 61
 preservare 48, 72
 preservativo 36
 preside 150
 presiedere 387
 prestare 158
 – soccorso 114
 prestarsi 375
 prestazione 156
 prestito 158
 presto (fare –) 117, 375
 presuntuoso 88, 130
 pretendere 33, 37, 92
 pretenzioso 130
 prevalere 297
 prevaricare 37
 prevenire 118
 preziosa 132
 prezzo 158
 prima (di) 331–332
 – che/di 411
 – di tutto . . . 442
 primato 41
 primavera 186
 primitivo 48
 primo 378, 382, 403, 442
 in – luogo . . . 442
 principale 222
 principi 87
 principi 87
 principio 153
 privo 51
 – di sensi 46
 proboscide 51
 procedere 303, 305
 procedimento 61
 procedura 61
 procella 144
 processare 37, 154
 processione 61, 145
 processo 48, 61, 161
 proclamare 133
 prodigio 69
 prodigo 38, 69
 prodotto 32
 prof 150
 proferire 133
 professione 156
 – legale 39
 professore 150
 professoressa 150
 profumo 141
 profumare 304
 profumino 141
 progettare 371
 programmare 376

- progredire 303
 progressi 260
 proibire 373, 407
 proiettare 152
 proiettile 93
 prolungarsi 111
 promessa 182
 promettere 369
 pronome 222
 pronto 37, 377
 pronunciare 133
 pronunciarsi 133
 propaganda 48
 propellente 107
 proporre 371, 372
 proposito 62
 proposizione 48, 69, 222
 proposta 48, 62
 proprio 222, 282
 prosciugare 301
 prosciugato 105
 proseguire 48, 75, 298, 303
 prossimo 221, 377
 protervo 130
 protesta 144
 prova 34
 dare – 139
 mettere alla – 154
 provarci 167
 provare 74, 154, 375
 provenire 296
 provvedere 48, 109
 provvidenza 107
 pseudonimo 121
 pubblicazione 92
 pubblicità 31
 pubblicitario (cartellone –) 129
 pubblico 51
 pucciare 11
 pugno 159
 pulce 182
 pulcino 123, 184
 pulizia 135
 punizione 37
 punta 82
 punti (due –) 224
 puntini 182
 – di sospensione 224
 – puntini 224
 punto 82, 224, 226, 286
 – di vista 140
 – e virgola 225
 – esclamativo 225
 – interrogativo 225
 – vendita 138
 a un – morto 182
 di – in bianco 88, 182
 può darsi 408
 pupilla 82
 pupillo 82
 pupo/-a 96
 pur di 418
 purché 412, 419
 pure 425
 puro 282
 putiferio 182
 puttana 435
 puzza 141
 puzzo 141

 quadro 224
 quale 422–423
 qualificativo 222
 qualora 413, 419
 quando 413, 419
 quanti 423
 quanto 272, 410, 423
 quantunque 410
 quasi (che) 413
 quattordicesima 127
 quattrini 120
 quattrino 120
 quattro 41, 178, 179, 181, 183
 quattrocchi (a –) 182
 quel(lo) che 423
 quelli che 423
 querela 37
 questione 49
 questurino 128
 quindi 442

 rabberciare 131
 rabberciata 131
 raccogliere 72
 raccomandare 372
 racconciare 131
 racconciata 131
 raccontare 72, 133, 369
 raddoppiare 300
 radere 100
 – al suolo 103
 radersi 100
 radio 62, 253
 raffazzonare 131
 raffazzonata 131
 ragazzaccio 96
 ragazzino/-a 96
 ragazzo/-a 96
 raggio 62
 ragguagliare 118

 ragione (avere –) 161
 dare – 161, 182
 ragliare 123
 raglio 123
 rallegrare 366
 rallegrarsi 370
 rammaricarsi 370, 404
 rammendare 69, 131
 rammentare 69
 ramoscello 143
 rana 123
 randello 143
 rapimento 62
 rapina 62
 rapinare 62, 142
 rapire 37, 62, 142
 rappezzare 131
 rappezzata 131
 rapporto 69
 raro 184, 377
 rasare 100
 rasarsi 100
 rasente 348
 raspa 82
 raspo 82
 rassegnarsi 375
 rasserenare 313
 rasserenarsi 313
 rassomigliare 297, 388
 rattoppare 131
 rattristare 313
 rattristarsi 313
 razza 82
 razzia (fare –) 142
 raziare 142
 razzo 82
 ré/rè 84
 reale 31, 49
 realizzare 370
 realtà (in –) 441
 reato 99
 reattore 49
 recalcitrante 377
 recapitare 109
 recare 149
 reception 49
 recidere 100
 recinto 40
 reciprocamente 312
 recita 37, 62
 recital 37, 62
 recitare 133
 reclamare 92
 réclame 129
 record 37, 41
 recupero 62
 redattore 34

 refe 145
 regalare 109
 regalo 108
 reggersi 181
 reggipetto 153
 reggiseno 153
 registrare 37, 49
 regno 49
 regola 79
 regolo 79
 relativo 222
 relax 41
 relazione 49
 reliquia 62
 relitto 62
 remo 182
 remoto 221
 remunerazione 127
 rendere 366
 – conto 313
 – noto 118
 rendersi conto 313, 370, 406
 reni 255
 repentaglio 182
 responsabile 373
 resta 145
 restare 297, 309, 375
 – di sasso 131
 restaurare 49, 131
 restaurazione 62
 restauro 62
 resti 49
 restio 49
 resto 49, 120
 rete 40, 137
 reticente 49
 retina 87
 rètina 87
 retrarre 63
 retribuzione 37, 127
 retro 93
 retrocedere 300
 retta (dare –) 159
 rettificare 131
 rettore 43, 150
 reumatismi 260
 revisione 49
 revolver 112
 riarso 105
 riassumere 37
 ribassare 71, 300
 ribellarsi 313
 ricadere 71
 ricambiare 71
 ricerca 260
 ricerche 260

- ricetta 62
 ricettazione 62
 ricevimento 49
 ricezione 49
 richiesta 33, 92
 richiudere 72
 ricognizione 37, 62
 ricominciare 37, 374
 ricomporre 74
 riconciliare 49, 72
 riconoscente 373
 riconoscenza 37, 62
 riconoscimento 62
 ricoprire 37
 ricordare 37, 314, 370, 388
 ricordarsi 314, 370
 ricordo 37
 ricorrenza 35, 49, 117
 ricorrere 49, 73, 303
 – in giudizio 48
 ricovero 62
 ricuperare 37
 ricupero 62
 ridere 187, 374, 381
 ridotto sul lastrico 182
 ridurre 100
 – in cattivo stato 33
 riferire 49, 133
 riferirsi 49
 rifilare 109
 rifiutare 371, 406
 rifiutarsi 371
 rifiuti 260
 riflessivo 223
 rifornire 158
 rilasciare 62
 rilassare 62
 rilassarsi 41, 62
 rilegare 73
 rilevante 37
 rilevanza 37
 riluttante 49, 377
 rima 182
 rimandare 45, 49, 176
 rimanere 131, 297, 309, 375
 rimangiarsi 182
 rimbalzare 296
 rimbambito 146–147, 148
 rimbombare 298
 rimediare 69, 131
 rimediata 131
 rimproverare 372
 remunerazione 127
 rimuovere 149
 rincarare 300
 rinchiudere 72, 159
 rincorrere 73, 303
 rincrescere 297, 366, 404, 408
 rinforzare 302
 rinfrescare 302
 rinfusa (alla –) 182
 ringiovanire 300, 302
 ringraziare 372
 rinnegare 74
 rinsecchito 151
 rintoccare 124
 rintocco 124
 rintronare 298
 rinunciare 375
 rinvenire 75
 riparare 131
 riparata 131
 ripassare 74
 ripasso 49
 ripercorrere 303
 riportare 49
 riporto 69
 riposo 41, 49
 riprendere 37, 137, 374
 riprendersi 37
 ripristinare 131
 riprovare 74
 ripugnare 366
 ripulire 142
 riscaldare 302
 rischiare 369
 risentire 37
 risentirsi 37
 riserva 49
 riservarsi 371
 risicare 186
 risolvere 371, 385
 risparmi 120
 rispettabile 44
 rispondere 182, 369, 388
 rissa 34
 ristorare 49
 ristorazione 62
 ristoro 62
 ristrutturare 131
 risultare 297, 368
 risuonare 298
 risuscitare 300
 ritardo 382
 ritenere 370, 405
 ritirare 63, 313
 ritirarsi 313
 ritirata 63
 ritiro 63
 ritornare in sé 182
 ritrarre 63
 ritrattare 63
 ritrovare 37
 riuscirci 167
 riuscire 50, 164, 296, 366, 375, 385
 riva 140
 rivalità 43, 98
 rivelare 139
 rivendicare 38, 75, 92
 rivendita 138
 rivenditore 138
 rivenditrice 138
 rivenire 75
 riverenza 59
 rivolgere 313
 rivolgersi 313
 rivoltella 112
 rocca 63
 – di Gibilterra 131
 roccia 63, 131
 muro di – 155
 rogo 106
 romancio 63
 romanesco 15, 63
 romanico 63
 romanista 63
 romano 63
 romantico 63
 romanza 82
 romanzo 63, 82
 romeno 63
 rompere 97, 186
 – il muso/la faccia 106, 179
 – le scatole/le palle/i coglioni 91, 182
 rompersi 97, 124
 rondine 123, 186
 rosa 183, 253
 rosicare 186
 rosone 156
 rossiccio (marrone –) 35
 rosso 187
 rotare 63
 roteare 63
 rotella 182
 rotolare 300
 rotto 182
 rottura 124, 435
 rovescio 93, 144
 alla rovescia 93
 rovinare 38, 101
 ruba (andare a –) 175
 rubare 74, 142
 rubinetto 38, 160
 rude 37
 ruggire 123
 ruggito 123
 rumeno 63
 rumore 38, 122
 ruota 175
 ruotare 63
 sabbatico 117
 sabotare 101
 saccheggiare 142
 sagace 42
 salame 146–147
 salario 127
 salire 31, 98, 298, 374
 salita 115
 salpare 119, 300
 saltare 302
 – agli occhi 180
 saltellare 169, 294, 295
 salterellare 169
 salto 143, 155
 salumiere 16
 salvare 176
 salvarsi 177
 salvato 187
 salvo che 412
 sampietrino 132
 sandalo 136
 sano 184, 187
 santo (adj) 282
 – cielo! 437
 santa pace/pazienza! 435
 santo (n) 180
 stinco di – 183
 santuario 49
 sapere 118, 267, 306–307, 367, 370, 395, 406
 fare – 118
 saperla lunga 165
 saponetta 39
 sasso 132, 184
 sassolino 132
 sbagliare 312, 386, 387
 sbagliarsi 312
 sbaragliare 102
 sbarcare 300
 sbarra 39, 108, 143, 225
 sbarretta 225
 sbattere 71, 124
 sbattersene 71
 sberla 11
 sbiadire 300
 sbiancare 300
 sbigottire 302
 sbirro 128

Italian word index

- sbocciare 297
sbolognare 109
sbottare 297
sbrigharsi 117, 375
sbucare 296
scacciare 71
scadere 71, 296
scaglia 70
scagliare 152
scala 70, 82, 260
scalare 98
scalo 82
scalogna 11, 107
scalpello 38
scambiare 71
scambievolmente 312
scambio 53
scampanare 124
scampanellare 124
scampanello 124
scampanio 124
scampare 305
scamparla 165
scandaglio 70
scandalo 70
scandire 38
scannare 38
scannerizzare 38
scanno 134
scappare 296
scappata 155
scaracchio 46
scaraventare 152
scarno 151
scarogna 11
scarpa 136
scarpata 115
scarpe 126
scarpone 136
scassare 97
scassarsi 97
scatola 40
 rompere le scatole 182
scattare 305
scaturire 297
scavo 116
scegliere 371
scemo 146–147, 148
scena 41
scenario 49
scendere 298, 374
schei 120
scheletrico 151
schermare 70
schermire 70
schernire 70
schiaffeggiare 159
schiaffo 11, 124, 159
schiantare 97, 305
schiantarsi 97
schiarire 302
schiettare 297
schiaivo 135
schiena 93
schienale 93
schierarsi 161
schifezza/che –! 436
schifo/che –! 182, 436
schifoso 104
schiodo 112
schiodere 72
schizzare 300
scia 87
scià 87
sciagura 89
scialuppa 47
 – di salvataggio 95
sciare 294, 295
scimunito 146–147, 148
sciocchezze 260
sciocco 146–147, 148
scippare 142
sciupare 101
sciupato 151
scivolare 306
scocciare 42, 91
scoglio 132
scolare 52, 72, 304
scolaro 50
scomparire 297
scomporre 74
sconcio 104
sconfiggere 102
scongiurare 92, 372
scongiuro 177
scontare 72
scontento 404
scontro 89
scopo 40
scoppiare 297, 374
scoprire 175, 182, 370
scoraggiare 313, 381
scoraggiarsi 313
scordare 314
scordarsi 314, 370
scorrere 72, 300, 303
scortare 149
scossa 33
scostumato 12
scotch 41
scottare 302
scozzese 41, 177
scranna 134
scranno 134
scritta 129
scrivere 370
scrofa 123
scroscio 144
scrutare 38, 105
sculacciare 159
scuola 32, 150
scuotimento 33
scurire 300
scurrile 104
sdegnoso 130
sdraio 134
sdrucchiolare 296
sdrucchiolo 221
se 95
 – vogliamo 440
sé (fuori di –) 178
 ritornare in – 182
sebbene 410, 441
seccare 42, 91, 366, 408
secco 105, 151
secolare 50, 125
seconda mano 125
secondario 222
sede 134
sedere (n) 95
sedere (V) 297, 312
sedersi 312
sedia 11, 134
sedile 134
seducente 94
sega (fare –) 11
segaligno 151
seggio 134
seggiola 11, 134
seggiolino 134
seggiolone 134
seghino (fare –) 11
segnale 129
segnare 137
segretario 64
segreteria 64
seguire 64, 75, 298
seguire 64, 298, 380
selce 132
sella 134
sellino 134
selvaggio 45, 51, 64
selvatico 45, 64
sembrare 164, 297, 367,
 368, 405, 408
semplice 32, 222, 282
 tempo – 223
semplicemente 32
semplicione 146–147
senile 125
sennò 442
sensato 38, 64
sensibile 38, 64
sensitivo 64
sentenza 50
senti /sentite! 440
sentiero 127
sentirci 167
sentire 367
sentirsela 165, 371
sentore 141
senz'altro 434
senza che/di 412
sepolcrale 132
sequela 145
sequestrare 142
sera 64, 187
serata 64
serie 145
serio 182
serranda 11
servile 36
servire 164, 306, 366, 386
servirsi 388
servitore 135
servitrice 135
servitù 135
servizio 135, 156
servo 135
setola 113
settimanale 127
sezionare 100
sfasciare 97
sfasciarsi 97
sfera 93
sfidare 376
sfiga 11, 107
sfigurare 101
sfilare 306
sfilata 145
sfilza 145
sfiorire 297
sfociare 297
sfogare 301
sfollagente 143
sfollare 302
sfondare 73
sfortuna 107
sforzarsi 154, 371
sfuggire 304
sfumare 301
sgabello 134
sgambetto 159
sganassone 11
sgelare 298, 302
sgherro 128
sgocciolare 304
sgoccioli (agli –) 183

- sgominare 102
 sgonfiare 302
 sgorgare 296
 sgraffignare 142
 sgualter/-a 135
 sì 314–315, 316
 sì 379, 436
 si dice 406
 siccome 422
 Sicilia (fare –) 11
 sicurezza 50
 sicuro 50, 373, 405–409
 signore 40
 signorina 96
 silenzio 155
 sillaba 223
 simpatia 38
 simpatico 38
 singolare 222
 sinistra 79
 sinistro 79, 89
 sino 336
 sintassi 221
 sistemare 131
 sistemata 131
 slanciato 151
 slittare 296
 sloggiare 121
 smantellare 103
 smettere 371
 smetterla 165
 smilzo 151
 sminuzzare 97
 smoking 41
 smorfia 106
 smottare 297
 smunto 151
 snello 151
 sobborgo 126
 soccorrere 114, 303
 soccorso (prestare –) 114
 soddisfatto 33, 373
 sofferenza 35
 soffiare 142
 soffitta 31
 soffocare 302
 soffriggere 301
 soffrire 387
 Sofia 87
 Sòfia 87
 soggetto (adj) 50
 soggetto (n) 50, 223
 soggiogare 102
 sognare 370, 387, 406
 sogno (manco/nemmeno
 per –) 437
 soldi 36, 120, 183, 260
 soldo 120
 sole 184
 solennità 117
 solere 161
 solido 50
 solito (essere –) 161, 367
 sollecitare 92
 solo 184, 187, 282, 378,
 403
 non – . . . ma anche 441
 somigliare 388
 somma 46
 sommato (tutto –) 442
 somministrare 42, 109
 sommità 153
 sonare 124
 soppesare 74
 sopportare 38, 74
 sopra 343–345
 di – 153
 sopracciglio 113
 sopraggiungere 296
 soprannome 121
 soprascarpa 136
 sopravvivere 297
 sordido 104
 sordo 184
 sorgere 296
 sorpassare 74
 sorprendere 377, 408
 sorpresa 382
 sorpreso 373, 404
 sorreggere 114
 sorsata 120
 sorso 120
 sorte 107
 sospeso 176
 sospettare 370
 sostantivo 222
 sostanziale 49, 64
 sostanzioso 50, 64
 sostenere 31, 38, 64, 73,
 114, 133, 405
 sostentare 64
 sottile 151
 sottintendere 35
 sotto 342–343
 esserci – qualcosa 183
 sottomettere 102
 sottrarre 142, 149
 sozzo 104
 spaccare 97
 – il muso/la faccia 179
 spaccarsi 97, 124
 spacciatore 138
 spacciatrice 138
 spaccio 138
 spacco 124
 spada 38
 spago 145
 spaghetti 260
 spalle 93
 spalliera 93
 sparacchiare 170
 sparare 124, 137
 spararsi 137
 sparcchiare 160
 sparire 297
 fare – 142
 sparo 124, 137
 sparuto 151
 spaventare 313
 spaventarsi 313
 specialista 382
 specie 64
 spegnere 160
 spendere un patrimonio
 120
 spendereccio 38
 spennare 142
 speranza 187
 sperare 370
 sperimentare 50, 154
 spese 260
 spettacolo 36, 50
 spettare 297, 366
 spettatore 51
 spettegolare 133
 spezia 64
 spezzare 97
 – una lancia 178
 spezzarsi 97
 spezzettare 97
 spiacere 297
 spianare 103, 302
 spiattellare 133
 spiccare 160
 spicciarsi 117
 spiccioli 120, 260
 spiegare 133, 139
 spifferare 133
 spin 153
 spine (sulle –) 183
 spingarda 112
 spingere 376
 spinto 104
 spiovere 298, 304
 spiritico 64
 spiritoso 64
 spirituale 64
 splendido 94
 spocchioso 130
 spogliare 38, 142
 spola 183
 sponda 140
 sporco 104
 sporgere 301
 sportello 156
 sportivo 38
 sposare 314
 sposarsi 314
 spostarsi 121
 spranga 143
 spregiudicato 61
 premere 74
 sprezzante 130
 sprizzare 301
 sprofondare 301
 spronare 376
 spugna 183, 185
 spuntare 100
 sputo 46
 squadra 65, 140
 squadriglia 65
 squadrone 65
 squagliarsela 165
 squillare 298
 squirt/squit-squit 123
 squittio 123
 squittire 123
 stabilimento 50
 stabilire 370
 staffe 91, 181
 stage 41
 stagionato 125
 stalla 183
 stampella 10, 12
 stancare 313
 stancarsi 313, 371
 stanco 374
 stanfella 10
 stanga 143
 starci 167
 stare 290–291, 297, 375,
 381, 386
 – sui coglioni/sul
 cazzo/sullo
 stomaco 183
 starnutire 124
 starnuto 124
 starsene 166
 starter 41
 statistica 260
 stecca 79, 143
 stecco 79, 143
 stendardo 129
 stentare 375
 sterminare 103
 sterpo 143
 stesso 282
 stillare 301

Italian word index

- stinco di santo 183
 stitichezza 44
 stitico 44
 stivale 136
 stivaletto 136
 stoffa 34, 47
 stolido 146–147
 stolto 146–147
 stomaco (stare sullo –) 183
 storia 50, 67
 storiella 67
 storpiare 101
 stoviglie 260
 stracciare 102
 straccio 11
 stradale 128
 stradicciola 127
 stradina 127
 strano 377
 straparlare 133
 strapuntino 134
 straripare 297
 strato 153
 stravagante 38
 stravincere 102
 strenna 108
 stretto 41
 stringa 11, 145
 stringere 187
 strisciare 294
 striscione 129
 strofa 39
 stronzo 435
 struzzo 36
 studiare 105
 studio legale 34
 studioso 50
 stufa 106
 stufo 374
 stupendo 94, 434
 stupido 146–147, 148
 stupire 302, 313
 stupirsi 313, 370, 404
 stupito 404
 stuprare 37
 su 343–345, 425, 435
 subentrare 297
 subito 37
 subordinato 222
 succedere 50, 297, 368
 successo (avere –) 50
 sudare 176
 suddito 50
 sudicio 104
 sudore 141
 sufficiente 377
 suffisso 223
- suggerimento 50, 65
 suggestione 50, 65
 suicidarsi 313
 suola 79
 suolo 79
 suonare 124, 306
 suono 124
 suora 11
 super 107
 superbia 130
 superbo 50, 130
 superficiale 34, 153
 superficie 106, 153, 258
 superiore 150, 153, 362
 superlativo 222
 supermarket 138
 supermercato 138
 supplicare 92, 372
 supponiamo che 419
 supporre 405
 supposto che 419
 surgelare 73
 suscettibile 50
 susseguire 302
 sussistere 297
 svaligiare 142
 svanire 297
 sveglia 66
 svegliare 75, 313
 svegliarsi 75, 313
 svelare 370
 svelto 151
 svenire 75, 296
 sventura 89
 svenuto 46
 svignarsela 165
 svilupparsi 111
 svolgere 156
- tabella 65
 tabellone 129
 tabula rasa 183
 tabulato 65
 tacchino 123
 tacco 114
 tacere 387
 tagliare 100
 tagliuzzare 100, 169
 tale 379
 – che 411
 – da 411
 talento 108
 tallone 114
 talmente 379
 talpa 184
 tamburo 143
 tanfo 141
- tanto 379
 – . . . quanto 272
 tappa (bruciare le tappe)
 183
 tapparella 11
 tappo 30, 38, 153
 tardi 187
 targa 129
 tassa 82
 tasso 82
 tattica 260
 tavola 43, 50, 65
 tavolata 79
 tavolato 65, 79
 tavolino 65
 tavolo 50, 65
 te 8, 84, 262
 té/tè 84
 teenager 96
 telecamera 31
 telefonare 388
 telefono 124
 televisione 65
 televisore 65
 temere 370, 404
 tempesta 144
 tempestato 65
 tempestivo 65
 tempestoso 65
 tempio 257
 tempo 183, 187, 223
 è – che 408
 fare in – 375
 temporale (adj) 50
 temporale (n) 50, 144
 tendere 375
 tendine del ginocchio 145
 tenebre 260
 tenerci 167
 tenere (– a bada) 183
 – conto 161
 – presente 161
 tennis 136
 tentare 154, 371, 386
 tenuto 375
 tergiversare 37
 terminare 298, 371
 termine 50, 88
 terna 51, 79
 terno 79
 terra 65
 terreno 65
 terrestre 65
 crosta – 153
 terribile 377
 terrone 13
 terzetto 51
- terzina 79
 terzino 79
 terzo 187
 teso 41
 tessuto 34
 testa 70, 82, 180, 183
 – di cazzo 435
 cenno con la – 166–167
 testata (dare una –) 158
 teste 70
 testicolo 93
 testimonianza 34
 testo 70, 82
 testone 88, 146–147
 tetto 36
 tetta 70, 82
 tetto 70, 82, 153
 tettoia 70
 ti 262
 ticchettare 124
 ticchettio 124
 tic-tac 124
 tifone 144
 tight 41
 tigre 123
 tirare 137, 152
 – le cuoia 177
 – sul prezzo 158
 tirarla per le lunghe 165
 tirata 120
 tirato per i capelli 176
 tiro 137
 tirocinio (periodo di –) 41
 titolare 150
 toc toc 124
 toccare 164, 297, 366
 – ferro 177
 togliere 149, 388
 tombale 132
 tonale 65
 tondo 224
 tonico (adj) 65, 221
 tonico (n) 65
 tonno 70
 tono 70
 tonto 146–147, 148
 top 153
 top spin 153
 topo 123, 186
 torcere (filo da –) 177
 tormenta 82, 144
 tormentare 91
 tormentarsi 31
 tormento 82
 tornado 144
 tornare 296, 374
 – a bomba 175

- tornarsene 166
 toro 123, 183, 184
 torta 83
 tórta/tórta 84
 torto 83
 avere – 161
 dare – 161, 182
 tosare 100
 tosto 177
 tra 345–346
 traboccare 178, 304
 tracinare 304
 tracotante 130
 tragitto 127
 traiettoria 127
 trambusto 32
 tramezzo 155
 tramontana 181
 tramontare 296
 tranciare 100
 tranne che 412
 transatlantico 95
 transitivo 223
 trapassato 224
 trapelare 296
 trascorrere 301, 303
 trascurare 371
 trasferirsi 47, 121
 trasgressione 99
 traslocare 47, 121
 traslocarsi 121
 trasportare 149
 trattamento 66
 trattato 66
 trattenerne 313
 trattenersi 313
 tratti 106
 trattino 225
 tratto 66
 traversa 143
 treccia 145
 tredicesima 127
 tremare 185
 trillare 123, 124
 trillo 123, 124
 trimestre 50
 trinciare 100
 trio 51
 trionfare 102
 trisdrucchio 221
 tritare 100
 triviale 38
 troia 435
 tromba d'aria/marina 144
 trombone 112
 troncare 100
- tronco (adj) 221
 tronco (n) 51
 tronfio 130
 trono 134
 troppo 187, 380
 trottole 180
 trovare 186, 377
 andare/venire a – 155
 trovarsi 375
 trafugare 142
 trattenersi 381
 tu 268–269, 316
 tuffo 86
 tufo 86
 tuonare 298
 tuono 70
 turbine 144
 turco 180, 185
 turpe 104
 tuttavia 441
 tutto (– sommato) 442
 fare di – 154
- uà 124
 ubbidire 388
 ubriacare 35
 ubriaco 183
 uccellino 123
 uccello 123
 –ucchiare 173
 uccidere 137
 –uccio 170
 –uccolo 170
 –ucolare 173
 udiencia 51
 uè! 438
 uèuè 124
 uffa! 435
 ufficiale 66
 ufficio 40, 66, 156
 ufficioso 66
 ultimo 153, 187, 378, 382, 403
 ululare 123
 ululato 123
 umore 51
 umorismo 51
 unico 282, 378, 403
 università 32, 150
 uno (l'un l'altro) 312
 unto 104
 –uolo 170
 uomo delle pulizie 135
 uovo 181, 186
 uragano 144
 uranio 143
 urlo 254
- urtare 124
 urto 124
 usa e getta 152
 usanza 186
 usare 367
 usato 125
 uscire 119, 296
 uscirsene 166
 uscita 34, 92, 108
 usignolo 185
 utile 378
 uva 260
 –uzzare 173
 –uzzo 170
- va' (a dar via il culo) 435
 – a quel paese 435
 – al diavolo 435
 vabbè 434, 440
 vacante 51
 vacanza 38, 117
 vacca 123
 vaffanculo 435
 vagare 295
 vagliare 105
 vago 51
 vai 436
 valente 66
 valere 160, 187, 297
 – la pena 366, 407–408
 valido 47, 66, 377
 valigie (fare le –) 183
 valle (a –) 88
 valore (di –) 66
 valoroso 66
 valuta 120
 valutare 105
 valvola dell'aria 41
 vanaglorioso 130
 vanga 38
 vanitoso 51, 130
 vano (adj) 51
 vano (n) 51
 vaporetto 95
 variare 301, 303
 vario 282
 varo 47
 vascello 95
 vaso 178, 185
 vecchio 125, 184, 282
 vederci 167
 vedere 154, 155, 166, 368, 371, 386
 (non) – l'ora 407
 – tutto nero/ rosa 183
 fare – 139
 vedersela (brutta) 165
- vedi/vedete 440
 vediamo (un po') 440
 veglia 66
 vegliare 75, 387
 vela 83
 veleggiare 294
 velenifero (dente –) 152
 veliero 95
 vello 113
 velo 83
 veloce 184, 377
 velocemente 137
 vena (in –) 183
 vendicare 38, 75
 venire 75, 292, 296, 308, 366, 374, 386
 – a trovare 155
 – alla luce 178
 – alle mani 179
 – su 111
 vènti/vènti 84
 vento 38, 144, 184, 185
 venuta 38
 vera 11
 verbalizzare 39
 verbo 223
 verde (al –) 182
 verga 143
 vergogna 33, 408
 avere – 370, 383
 vergognarsi 313, 370
 verificare 51, 105
 verificarsi 51
 vernacolo 119
 vero 31, 282
 è – 440
 versante 140
 versetto 39
 verso (n) 39, 122
 verso (prep) 336
 vertice 153
 veste 39
 vestito 260
 vetrata 66, 156
 vetrina 66, 156
 vetrino 66
 vetro 66, 110
 vetta 153
 vetusto 125
 vezzezzativo 223
 via 127, 253
 – libera 183
 buttare – 152
 e –! 435
 portare – 149
 viaggiare 294, 295
 viale 127

Italian word index

- | | | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|--|---------------------------|
| violetto 127 | visita 155 | voialtri 262 | whisky 41 |
| vicenda (a →) 312 | visitare 105, 155 | volare 302 | zaffata 141 |
| vicinanze 126, 260 | viso 106 | volante 253 | zampa 119 |
| vietare 373, 407 | vita 183, 187 | volerci 167, 297 | zanna 152 |
| vigile (urbano) 128 | vite 185 | volere 187, 267, 306–307,
367, 397, 407 | zappa 183 |
| vigna 67 | vittoria 66 | – bene 388 | zazzera 113 |
| vignetta 67 | vivacchiare 295 | volerne 166 | zecca (nuovo di →)
180 |
| vincere 102 | vivere 180, 299 | volgare 34 | zoccolo 136 |
| vincita 66 | viveri 260 | voltare 313 | zona limitrofa 126 |
| vincolo 145 | viziare 38, 101 | voltarsi 313, 374 | zoppicare 187, 294 |
| vino 180 | viziato 66 | volto 106 | zoppo 187 |
| violazione 99 | vizioso 51, 66 | votare 387 | zozzo 104 |
| violentare 37 | vocale 223 | votazione 66 | zuccone 146–147 |
| viottolo 127 | voce 38, 183 | voto 66 | zuppare 11 |
| virgola 225, 226 | voglio dire 440, 442 | vuoto 51, 116 | |
| virgolette 225 | voi 268–269 | | |

Grammar index

- a**, with direct object 8, 9, 325
a vs **ad** 321
accents on vowels 29
adjective, in impersonal expressions 315–316
– negative 286–288
– position 280–283
adverb, negative 286–288
– position 279–280
agent, in passive 309–310
agreement, past participle and pronouns 262
– past participle and reflexive 311–312
alphabet 226–228, 258
anche, position 279
andare, and gerund 291–292
– and passive 309
animals, gender 240
– noises 123
apodosis 416
articulated prepositions with infinitive 380–382, 424–425

causative expressions 368
che, in comparisons 270–272
chi, in relative clauses 423–424
ci, and auxiliaries 307
– in idioms 166–167
– pleonastic use 264
cleft sentences 279, 378
collective nouns, agreement with verb 261
con, with infinitive 380
comparative clauses 273, 414
compound nouns, gender 248–252
– plural 258–259
conditional, and sequence of tenses 400
conditional perfect tense 393 (*see also* Future in the past, hypotheses about the past)
conditional sentences 416–420
 (*see also* **periodo ipotetico**)
conjunctions, in conditional sentences 418–419
conjunctions requiring the subjunctive 410–413
connectors 20, 22, 441–442
consecutio temporum = sequence of tenses 399–401

da, with infinitive 378–379, 381
– in relative clauses 424
definite article with infinitive 380, 428
di, in comparisons 270–272
– with other prepositions 327, 335, 336, 343
dialect 2–5
– in interjections 433
direct object with **a** 8, 9, 325
direction, in verbs of movement 293–294
double consonants 6, 84–86

either . . . or 261
emphasis and word order 276
essere, as auxiliary 277, 295–307
– singular or plural 261
explicit subordinate clauses 421–424

factual conditionals 419–420
far fare 368
fillers 20, 22, 439–440
foreign words, gender 39, 239–240
– plural 258
future in the past, conditional perfect tense 393, 400
– future tense 391
– imperfect tense 396
future perfect tense 392
future tense 391
future, expression of 390

gerund, in conditional sentences 418
– in periphrases 290–292
– in subordinate clauses 425–427
– position of subject 277, 426
– with **stare**, **andare**, **venire** 290–292
gli, range of meanings 263–264

hypotheses about the past, conditional perfect 393
– imperfect tense 396
– **trapassato prossimo** 396
hypotheses about the present 391, 396
hypothetical conditionals 415, 416–419

if, in conditional sentences 418–419
il fatto che, and the subjunctive 409
imperative, future tense 391
– present tense 390
– subjunctive 403
imperfect and perfect 394–395
imperfect tense, with **da** 329
– and sequence of tenses 400
– in conditional sentences 417, 419
impersonal expressions 314–316, 407–409
implicit subordinate clauses 424–429
in, with infinitive 381–382
indirect questions, and subjunctive 410
infinitive, in conditional sentences 418
– in periphrases 291
– in subordinate clauses 424–425
– with **da** 323–330, 381
– with **stare**, **essere dietro** 291

-ing, how to translate 428–429
interjections 20, 22, 433–438

la in idioms 164–165

Lei 268–269, 403

location, expressed with **a** 323–324

– expressed with **in** 337–338

– expressed with **su**, **sopra** 343

loro, position 267

– impersonal 316

Loro 268–269, 403

manner, expressed with **a** 322–323

– expressed with **in** 338–339

– in verbs of movement 293–294, 295

modal attraction 414

modal verbs, and auxiliaries

306–307

– and pronouns 267

– and reflexives 314

– different tenses 397–398

movement, expressed with **a** 321

– expressed with **da** 328

– expressed with **in** 337–338

– expressed with **per** 340

movement verbs 293–294

ne 264–265, 272–273

– and auxiliaries 307

– in idioms 166

negative antecedents 414

neither . . . nor 261

nominalization 428

non 285–286, 289

– pleonastic 272, 273, 288, 412

nouns, gender 239–255

– number 256–260

number, expressions with **su**, **sopra**

343–344

numbers, and **altro** 283

object, impersonal 316–317

– position 277–279

open vs closed vowels 6–7, 83–84

passato prossimo, and **passato remoto** 393–394

– sequence of tenses 399, 401

passato remoto, and **passato prossimo** 393–394

– and sequence of tenses 399

passive 308–310, 314

past gerund 425, 426

past participle, agreement with

pronouns 262

– in impersonal expressions 316

– in subordinate clauses 427–428

– position of noun 277, 428

per, with infinitive 379–380

perché clauses, position 422

periodo ipotetico = conditional sentences 416–420

place names and prepositions 356

pluperfect 396–397

plural of nouns 256–260

prefix, negative 288–289

prepositions, articulated 321,

424–425

– following adjectives 373–374,

376–377, 379, 380

– following verbs 365–388

present conditional tense 389–391, 392

– sequence of tenses 401

present participle in subordinate clauses 427

present tense 389–391, 392

– with **da** 329

pronoun, and auxiliaries 307

– proclisis and enclisis 267

– negative 286–288

– reflexive, when omitted 311

– stressed vs unstressed 262, 311

pronouns of address 268–269

proper names, plural 258

protasis 416

reflexive verbs 301, 307, 311–315

regions of Italy, prepositions 356

register 5

relative clauses 9, 422–424

– and the subjunctive 413–414

– in conditional sentences 419

restare, and passive 309

rimanere, and passive 309

same subjects in noun clauses 404

sequence of tenses 399–401

sex, and gender 239–240

si, and passive 314–315

– impersonal 314–316

– with other pronouns 263–265, 266

singular and plural, meanings of

nouns 259–260

subject, impersonal 314–316

– position 276–277, 418, 426

subjunctive, in conditional sentences 417–418

– in dependent clauses 404–415

– in main clauses 403–404

– meaning 402–403

– sequence of tenses 400–401

subordinate clauses, before or after the main clause 409, 421–422, 427

suffixes, affective 168–173

– superlative 274–275

superlatives 273–275, 414

– with **di** 272, 334

syntactic doubling 7

telephone alphabet 226–228

time, expressed with **a** 322

– expressed with **da** 329

– expressed with **di** 333

– expressed with **in** 338

– expressed with **per** 340–341

– expressed with **su** 343–344

– expressed with **tra** 346

transition words 20, 22, 441–442

trapassato prossimo tense 396
(see also hypotheses about the past)

– and sequence of tenses 399

trapassato remoto tense 397

tu, impersonal 316

– vs **Lei** 268–269

uno, impersonal 316

venire, and gerund 292

– and passive 308

verbal periphrases 8, 10, 290–292

verbs of perception 367–368

vi 266

voi 268–269

weather verbs 298

word order, pronouns and verb 265–268

– subordinate clauses 421–422